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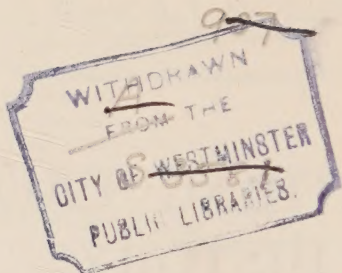
*Founder of "History"*

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# THIS THING CALLED HISTORY



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## FOREWORD

THIS little book makes no claim to original research; attempts, indeed, to do no more than set out, as simply and clearly as possible, what History is, what it tries to do, its value in the workaday world, and suggest means by which it may become of greater worth. The opinions of many outstanding authorities are cited, usually in their own words, since an original source is preferable to second-hand evidence. Effort has been made to include the many schools of thought so that the reader may, if so disposed, formulate his or her own philosophy.

Never was there more urgent need for clear thinking and bright vision than now, the period which marks the dawn, as we firmly believe, of the Great Transition. The bits and pieces of what is good in civilization as a whole must be preserved; its lumber destroyed by gradual elimination. This will take time and care. The obvious is often the least evident, and we may be reasonably certain that much that has lost its usefulness will be retained until, at long last, public opinion relegates it to the scrap-heap and the forgotten.

Some of nature's preliminary experiments in the making of man ended in disaster. Near-man came and went, unable for reasons we do not know to bear the burden of life. Our own species, *Homo sapiens* as it is called, has managed to survive, despite its inability to tame what has been so aptly termed "the bloody wild beast" in us. Slow to learn its lessons, humanity followed a First World War with a second conflict of greater magnitude in less than a generation. Perhaps both might have been avoided if the findings of History had been more closely studied by all concerned. This is not to imply that the subject we are considering is a kind of medical book that gives remedies which have only to be taken to effect a cure for all the diseases of the body politic. If that were so every statesman would be thumbing volumes on history most of his conscious hours.



"I say this with profound humility and respect," remarked Judge Crawford, "that it would not be a bad thing if every candidate for Parliament had to deposit with the returning officer a certificate that he or she had passed an examination in History." This would not necessarily help matters. Examinations may be no more than memory tests. Knowledge is only power when it is applied. Some individuals can mug-up a subject with comparative ease. If I have an axe to grind in the following pages, it is to utter a plea that history may be presented in a more attractive form and manner than hitherto, so that it may command the attention of the greatest possible number of people. Only by doing this shall we realize what a vast store of experience it embodies, take heart from the fact that man has advanced in a multitude of ways since he made his first essay in engineering by shaping crude flints, and appreciate our rich heritage of things of good report.

"The world can never move in a right direction," says Sir John Squire, "unless people will face facts, contemporary and historical, instead of basing its actions on the dreams and tidy theories of people working in studies and libraries who dread the verities of the variegated, beautiful and terrible world in which we live."

Some time since Prof. C. A. Beard drew attention to the remark of Henry Adams that there were four powerful organs in the modern world for suppressing unwelcome opinions and theories: the State, the Church, property and labour. This rather sweeping statement has a substantial dose of truth in it. All are vested interests, though they should be free as air. By refusing to accept face values as final, Beard adds, the historian "is likely to collide with powerful political and economic institutions, as well as with the organizations which claim to possess the seals of religion." The historian may refuse to think, and become a mere chronicler. He may shun the light and close his eyes to unpleasantness: "yet the path of trouble will be taken, by some historians at least. At all events the human spirit will tear at the vast complexity called history as actuality, seeking to wrest from it some light on the meaning, destiny,



and "choices of mankind. If those who know more will not attempt it, those who know less will attack the problem."

The public has a right to the best; will pay for it, read it, listen to it, see it if given the opportunity. The publishers of Macaulay's *History* did not hesitate to draw a cheque for £20,000 and hand it to the author, knowing full well that they would reap a handsome profit, as indeed they did. The old excuse for inefficiency is that the people get the Government they deserve. Accept this shibboleth if you like, though I for one do not. What is left? No more than that the deluded must remain dupes or rid themselves of their mummy trappings, and by diligent study make themselves safe for democracy and democracy safe for them.

"Never again" has been the stock phrase of the ages. So far it has failed to be translated into fact. It grins with mockery, like the Man in the Moon. The historian is fallible. He makes no claim to be all-knowing, yet he has knowledge not readily available to most of us. I plead that he may be given his chance, on the platform, on the screen, on the stage, in the printed page and on the field in pageants that will reconstruct yesterday and portray a vision of the future. He might even try to catch the Speaker's eye in Parliament and shock the politicians by shedding a ray or two on sepulchral gloom. Sir Ernest Barker has suggested that M.P.s would be all the better if they took refresher courses in history at one of the residential universities.

"Fear," says Prof. G. M. Wrong, "is a permanent curse in a democratic world. The politician fears the whole truth lest it should hurt his party. He fears to defy a current phase of public opinion though he knows it is wrong. The churchman fears the charge that he is drifting from the old accepted beliefs. The patriot is for his country, right or wrong. The historian, for his part, must banish fear. He may have to assault the reputation of popular heroes, to offend their admirers, to denounce the methods that have led to national victory, to wound national pride, to shock religious sentiment, to shatter belief in accepted economic policies and sumptuary laws. All this is a part of his day's work. His reward? To have told the truth and so to lead

society to an understanding of its foundations and of its enduring interests."

The conquest of the air suggests both miracle and menace. By its aid life has been saved and destroyed. Our next task is to exorcise the devil from science. We have discovered that the old idea of continuous, almost automatic, progress which was so marked a belief of the nineteenth century is a will-o'-the-wisp, but we also know that man found a way out of the jungle of the so-called Dark Ages.

Do you remember the rather dismal picture by G. F. Watts entitled "Hope", depicting a forlorn female sitting blindfold on three-quarters of the world thumbing a musical instrument with a single string? Did an artist choose to represent Clio he would need to work on a broader canvas. A background of seemingly meaningless space would give place to a pageant of peoples, with a panorama in colours sometimes sombre, occasionally brilliant, but seldom drab, to represent their myriad achievements. The goddess of History would toy with no shattered lyre. When mankind breaks one string it replaces it by another. The frame, the cultural heritage of the ages, remains the same. The tune may vary, but the harmony and discord of the distant past are part of the theme, for on yesterday this moment is based, as tomorrow will be superimposed on today.

History is the oratorio of humanity.

HAROLD WHEELER.

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# THIS THING CALLED HISTORY

## CHAPTER I

### THE FORGOTTEN COMMANDMENT

"LET there be light." Such is the first and forgotten commandment. It is recorded in the one and only history book to be found in many households. Tradition has made the volume part of the family outfit. Venerated and read by some, the majority of Bibles may well be little more than dust-traps, perhaps regarded with something approaching superstitious awe. This latter condition is to be regretted. The pages have a clear enough message for the most modern of the moderns, whatever one's opinion may be on the vexed problem of inspiration. An edition open on my desk as I write is called *The Bible for To-day*, and is so essentially up-to-date that it contains pictures of tanks and aircraft, battleships and power-plants.

Questioning over a number of years shows that History, when it is called by that name, is not a favourite subject. Labelled *The Times*, the *Scotsman*, the *Daily Mail*, the *Evening Standard* or some other designation, and the study is the most popular of all. It is read with avidity, if not always with intelligence. A morning and an evening course scarcely suffice. History is a mental food devoured by millions seven days of the week without the avid consumers fully realizing the fact. Only a minor portion of the contents of the journals is devoted to forthcoming events. The bulk of the information deals entirely with what has happened, which is history. The journalist is a historian in a hurry. He often uses the telephone instead of the pen. Neither his phrasing nor his facts necessarily suffer by reason of enforced urgency, though they sometimes do so.

The method and manner of presentation have much to do with this spurning and acceptance. The historian as such is usually slow and ponderous, given to great deliberation, and apt to incline to the idea that the longer he takes to present his work to the world the more likely he is to arrive at truth. Dullness of diction is counted for righteousness. Some of the more zealous scientific historians, as Theodore Roosevelt pointed out in a much-discussed Romanes Lecture, "apparently hold that the worth of a historical book is directly in proportion to the impossibility of reading it, save as a painful duty. . . . Dryness is not in itself a measure of value". Not that the historian's more lively competitor, or co-worker if you like, is always quite so swift as he is supposed to be. On occasion both recorder and reader are compelled to wait a considerable period before important facts are revealed. The Macaulays of the Press do not have it all their own way. They have no love for censors.

Secrets are often wrested from Ministers only after a considerable time has elapsed between an event and the registering of significant items connected with it. Sometimes they are kept in the cupboard where the State hides its collection of family skeletons. A question is asked in Parliament and the reply is made that notice must be given. The rigmarole is duly gone through. The answer may be vouchsafed, or it may not be "in the public interest" to reply. At the suggestion of Mr. C. R. Attlee, then Deputy Prime Minister, a Member asked for details about the number and tonnage of merchant ships lost in two convoys to Malta. The time-honoured shibboleth was trotted out. "But I put the question down at your suggestion," said inquisitive Mr. Stokes. "I certainly said you could put down a question," was the retort, "and I have given the answer." Whereupon the House laughed, and that was that. A joke hid the light. "The true story of the causes of our lamentable defence position in 1938 is known to few. I am one of those few, I have written that story and one day it will be read; but it would not be altogether desirable for the nation to read it today." So Admiral of the Fleet Lord Chatfield, First Sea Lord in the year mentioned, stated in March, 1942.



Time and again the nation is mollified by promises that the lessons of this or that disastrous campaign will be taken to heart. The luckless soldiers who bore the heat and burden of the fray are told that they have added a glorious page to our annals. Whether defeated or victorious makes no difference to the adjective, but it seems poor consolation. A representative of the Air Ministry assured the House of Commons that "British forces are never defeated. They sometimes have setbacks, but in the end they always win". It may be that a fellow Member showed a better appreciation of values when he told an American audience that "It is not a foregone conclusion that we shall win. We will win only if we deserve to win".

Here, perhaps, I dare put in a plea on behalf of the readers of certain newspapers enjoying circulations running into seven figures. It is that the editors give their clients the benefit of the doubt in the matter of intelligence. When the fate of Stalingrad was in the balance, a long article appeared in a Sunday journal on recent happenings on the Russian front. "Forty-five thousand Germans," John Citizen was informed, "killed in a few days in an area far from what Hitler regards as the crucial battlefield, is no minor blow for any army. Put it on top of the hundreds of thousands mown down in the fight for the south, add to it the million and a half dead, wounded and missing of last year's summer, autumn and winter campaigns in Russia, and can you avoid the belief that no army on earth can endure such a holocaust interminably?" The discourse ran to some 1,500 words. Throughout its length not a single Soviet soldier was killed or wounded. No mention was made of Russian losses other than of territory, which was "becoming serious", although minimized because "For the moment defeat or victory for us does not depend entirely on miles of territory lost or won. . . ." That, I submit, is a very one-sided view of the situation, because it failed to take into account any casualties in the Red Army. At the moment of writing I have no means of checking the writer's statistics but it may be assumed with reasonable certainty that Stalin's legions had not passed through the burning fiery

furnace with the impunity of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.

In the same issue of the paper readers were treated to a remarkable display of wisdom, with the usual thunders and lightnings of Sinai, on the part of a famous publicist. The Prime Minister had recently come back from Moscow and Cairo. "It is assumed", penned the pontiff, "that Mr. Churchill has returned in a mood of measured confidence with regard to the near and further prospects both in Russia and the Middle East. The over-riding factor will be the force of events. They may march fast."

Carlyle's splenetic outburst that there were 40,000,000 people in the United Kingdom, mostly fools, was said a good many years ago, but it must be assumed that many editors and writers are still of the same opinion. In this respect I beg them to think it possible that they are mistaken.

In the early stages of the present war it was customary to promise "every possible aid" to countries over-run by the brigand hordes. When they began to fall like nine-pins at the hand of a skilful thrower, it became common talk that the phrase almost foredoomed them to certain failure. The optimistic and untruthful official and "Spokesman" communiqués issued from Paris were responsible in no small measure for the demise of the Third Republic. When the truth leaked out the high blood pressure of the nation gave place to pernicious anaemia, from which it failed to recover. As to Britain's part, let it be remembered that there was always "complete agreement" at the meetings of the Allied War Council.

It having been decided that Lord Gort's dispatches would not be published until after the conclusion of hostilities they were duly printed as a Supplement to the *London Gazette* of the 10th of October, 1941. They made dull reading, and obviously could not satisfy. In the Field-Marshal's opinion it was not appropriate "to discuss questions affecting the higher command of the Allied forces: on these matters I received orders from H.M. Government and through the French commanders under whom I was placed. Nor is this Dispatch the place to deal at length

with the military lessons of the Campaign; I have already conveyed my detailed views to the proper quarter". Mr. H. G. Wells, a much-perused publicist and commentator, suggests that these dispatches "show some of the very worst qualities of the seasoned military character". He alleges that "One thing manifestly obsesses" Lord Gort: "that he was not to blame. That is his dominating idea". Readers must form their own judgment, but all will agree that the General "is a man of outstanding piety and courage."

Certainly no such criticism could be levelled at Viscount Wavell. Although his record of the early Libyan campaign, which started so well and ended so badly, has not seen the light of day, he has bluntly avowed that when he left the conquests in Cyrenaica to partly trained and partly equipped garrisons he had made miscalculations. "I did not expect," avowed the General, "that the army of the enemy would counter-attack before the end of April at the earliest, by which time I hoped to have back at least part of the seasoned divisions from Italian East Africa, and to have completed the equipment of the troops left in Cyrenaica. Unfortunately the enemy attacked at least a month before I expected it to be possible." The late Lord Fisher said "Never apologise"; he did not say "Never explain".

It is difficult to appreciate a statement such as this, telegraphed by a Capetown correspondent in August, 1942: "General Smuts said that Mr. Churchill had had to make changes in the Middle East Command, but those changes did not reflect on the men concerned." Having been trumpeted as a Heavenborn general, the Field-Marshal added that a certain officer was one of the ablest commanders he had ever met: "I have the highest opinion of him, but that does not mean he is the best man to win victory in North Africa."

The real Battle of the Tanks in Libya in 1942 led to a controversial Battle of the Tanks in Britain. Having had a "tank week" for Russia, and exerted themselves mightily to produce similar weapons for other fronts, munition workers were staggered to learn of the doubts raised as to the suitability of their products. There was much pondering

on the conservatism that apparently obsesses the military mind, particularly as the British had developed the idea of the mobile fortress, and used it in the First World War, much to the consternation of the Germans. Not that the idea was new. A relief dating from the 9th century B.C. pictures a tank used by the Assyrians. It had to be dragged into position, and had no caterpillar-track, but it possessed a cupola, was covered with armour, and mounted a battering-ram.

Between 1916 and 1918 the present writer was responsible for the making of vast quantities of 6-pdr. ammunition for firing from tanks, yet much of the stuff used in North Africa against the Axis forces was considerably lighter. A fact of this kind worries but does not elucidate. There is undoubtedly a case for Secret Sessions of Parliament in war time, but not for evasive replies in public sessions. The usual "must have notice" answer to awkward questions causes uneasiness on the part of the general public, of which Governments are apparently unaware. Frederick the Great spent part of his time listening to conversations carried on in inns. Mr. Churchill himself has said, "The use of recriminating about the past is to enforce effective action at the present".

Underestimating the strength of the enemy is apparently indigenous to Whitehall. It was believed that the Boers could be conquered with 15,000 to 20,000 troops; before the conflict was over nearly 350,000 were required. In the Second World War the pitiful numbers flung into the burning fiery furnace of various lands in our first attempts to rescue them need no setting down in print: they are inscribed on the tablets of memory because the ludicrous is seldom forgotten. Experience, it would seem, is too often regarded by Authority as material for the National Waste Collection. The lessons remain unlearned; the alleged "glorious" pages continue to be written in blood. As to loss of treasure, the amount of wealth represented by abandoned and destroyed equipment must be colossal.

During the First World War Mr. John T. McCutcheon the incisive American cartoonist, pictured a regiment o

men garbed as Father Time still thumping typewriters following the production of shelves of portly tomes. It was entitled "The Historians have a busy Future ahead of Them". In 1937, after almost twenty years of strenuous effort, the Carnegie Foundation succeeded in producing a *Social and Economic History of the World War* in 152 volumes. This was but one work of a vast library that included our own *British Documents on the Origins of the War, 1898-1914*, the *Official History of the War*, and so on. Knowing the value attached to Records, one wonders whether a copy of Earl Haig's speech at the Caledonian Club on July 27th, 1923, was filed for that future reference apparently so seldom made and so infrequently acted upon. Over 200 members of the Club fell in the First World War. "An undue proportion of your heavy losses," the Field-Marshal remarked, "would seem to have been incurred in the opening stages of the struggle, when our Army was called upon to take the field in a European war with forces numerically inadequate to the task it was asked to perform. . . . It may be that, by the mercy of Providence, unpreparedness does not lose a war; but the fact remains that the military handicap imposed by want of preparation can never be wholly caught up, no matter how long the war may last. The time may come when there are guns enough, munitions enough, but the men who die to hold the line while the guns are being made and soldiers trained to use them can never be replaced." It does not require an interpreter to translate such hand-writing on the wall.

The journalist garnishes his dish of history. He accentuates the salient points by using attractive type so that one absorbs rather than reads. The professional historian, or his publisher, evidently thinks that a solid meal should look the part. Heavy paper, dull binding and often enough no illustrations warn the reader that the meat is likely to prove tough. It suggests "a job of work", a need to "get down to it", almost a taking off of one's coat. History, which is multiplied experience, is dull because it is made so. Yet its basis is humanity, and there cannot be a more fascinating theme other than to the negligible few who hold that the



main disadvantage of life is that it has to be lived. We need hindsight as well as foresight. This does not mean that we must idolize and idealize yesterday. Far from it. There is such a thing as the clutching hand of tradition, to be avoided at all costs. That in itself is a lesson, and an extremely important one, which some of the Higher Ups do not always assimilate. A guide warns as well as directs. He points out the stumbling-blocks as well as the stepping-stones.

Consistency is the genius of mediocrity. Precedent forges fetters unless it is carefully watched. Yet nothing is more certain than that today is based on yesterday. The new grows out of the old. The Germans have established no entirely novel strategy or tactics; they have developed what already existed, as the Chinese and Russians have evolved guerrilla warfare. It is with any eye to evolution that history should be read, and it should be written in simple language. Science threatens to rob itself of jargon, to come off its high pedestal when explaining itself to the "common" people. "What is this 'unilateral' they keep talking about in Parliament?" I was once asked. When I answered that it meant no more and no less than one-sided, the man was almost dumbfounded. The world is involved enough without adding unnecessary complications in language. The forgotten commandment is of universal application.

It is fashionable to make blue-prints of this, that and the other. Estimable individuals, having failed to build a better earth after the First World War and succeeded only in transforming their promise of homes for heroes into doles for the despondent, are now busy plotting a New Order for the youngsters who fought to preserve the shreds of civilization that remained. Let their councils, boards, committees, sub-committees and other round-table and round-about devices refresh their memories by studying their own past failures and take warning. As has been well said, "The strength of a nation lies in its people, and its people do not live in Whitehall". It is a thousand pities that they may be precluded from reading the Official History of the present fight for freedom, on which learned men are now cogitating. They constitute the Advisory Committee appointed by the



Government to give counsel on the general plan of the projected publication. Is it too much to hope that they will garb Clio in an attractive but inexpensive format, and allow her to speak in simple language so that ordinary folk may appreciate and derive practical help from their arduous labours? Above all, "Let there be light".

Field-Marshal Sir William Robertson warned us of certain sinister influences at work in Government Departments when documents sealed for the duration are opened. War histories, he remarked on one occasion, do not bring out the extent to which State policy was in accord with military policy.

We need the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

## CHAPTER II

### TRUTH, PROGRESS AND EVOLUTION

THE truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth may be a counsel of perfection; an ideal. Yet it should not frighten us, for an ideal is no more than reality round the corner, to be pursued even though the going be long and tortuous and the ultimate goal apparently unattainable. Nansen taught that "The difficult is that which can be done immediately, the impossible that which takes a little longer". The question "What is truth?" has never been satisfactorily answered. Neither, for that matter, has life been adequately defined, but that does not prevent us from pursuing it, and approximating to an appreciation of its manifold manifestations. If we fail to get to the rock bottom of things we may at least plumb the depths as far as we are able with the means at our command. At the moment there is no mechanical apparatus that enables us to read a man's thoughts or ascertain deep-seated and unrevealed motives, although there is a machine that purports to record when a person is telling a lie. Granted that everything starts with thought, it is usually impossible to trace the origin of an event or an invention. Questioned as to last Wednesday's weather, most people find it difficult to recollect unless it is associated with some event of importance to them, such as a picnic spoiled by a thunderstorm.

A crude little sketch annotated Aug. 12/77 proves that on that date, unless the inventor made a mistake, which is possible but not probable, Edison ordered an assistant named Kruesi to make the first phonograph, later to develop into the gramophone and other speech-recording devices, but it does not necessarily imply that the famous inventor conceived the notion of the machine on the same day. More than likely he made no note of the initial idea. To trace origins is far more difficult than pedigree-hunting. All we can say regarding the ubiquitous cinematograph is that

one of the early experiments in moving pictures was the toy known as the zoetrope, invented in 1860, aided and abetted by developments of the camera and the introduction of the celluloid film. Its value to history is enormous, especially since the addition of the sound-track, enabling us to see and to hear such an event as a battle. The proverb that "Coming events cast their shadows before" may or may not be true, but some important events now leave their shadows and echoes behind for all to see and hear.

The war correspondent with a pencil can still roughly delineate a phase on a stricken field, filling in more or less accurate details when completing his picture in safer surroundings, but his sketch or canvas cannot hope to compete with the mechanical instrument. Not that his work has been rendered obsolete. On the contrary, he may discern features that the optical eye does not see on account of dust or other difficulties. The machine is not the absolute master of man. Even with the aid of the cinematograph operator on the ground and in the sky, an artist and a dozen war correspondents making notes at one and the same time, we have not arrived at the ultimate truth. The observers cannot be here, there and everywhere on the site. Some points must be missed. At least we have an approximation to exactitude, and that must suffice.

We do not view a building by making a minute inspection of each individual brick. Not seeing the wood for the trees is a wise if overworked observation. In surveying the drama of life there are occasions when to take the long view, so beloved by commentators when the war situation was unfavourable, is pre-eminently necessary. Unfortunately in attempting to let in the light historians have too often succeeded in obscuring it more successfully than a householder in a black-out.

History has got a bad name because so many of its exponents have failed to follow the example of Ezekiel. The dry bones in the valley have remained such. There may have been a noise and a shaking, a covering of sinews and flesh and skin, but no breath came into them. They

are as inanimate as Jeremy Bentham sitting on a chair in his glass case at University College, London.

This search for truth, like the hunting for the pot of gold at the rainbow's end, has caused much nerve-racking. Fretted hours have been the lot, and oftentimes the only reward, of the weary seekers. Matthew Paris, monk of St. Albans, endured them in the thirteenth century. This painstaking interviewer of eye-witnesses and fearless exposé of unworthy deeds in Church and Court, felt the chilly blast of discouragement. "The case of historical writers is hard," he sighed, "for if they tell the truth they provoke man, and if they write what is false they offend God." The labours of the patient copyist, doing no more than transcribing the work of another, toiling in the scriptorium of a monastery that boasted no central heating and probably not even a brazier, was no child's play. Here is a note penned at the bottom of one of these manuscripts: "I pray you, good readers who may use this work, do not forget him who copied it. It was a poor brother named Louis, who while he copied the volume, which was brought from a foreign country, endured the cold, and was obliged to finish in the night what he could not write by day."

It is related that when Sir Robert Walpole was ill, his nerves jangled and his body tortured by physical pain, he asked for a novel. "Bring me something that is true," he muttered; "not history, for that I know to be a lie." On this particular question, but referring to the elder Pitt, the first Lord Rosebery wrote, no doubt out of his own experience, that "the life of a man is not his public life, which is always alloyed with some necessary diplomacy, and which is sometimes only a mask; it is made up of a thousand touches, a multitude of lights and shadows, most of which are invisible behind the austere presentment of statecraft".

The same writer also quotes a conversation that Disraeli recollected. "You hear many lies told as history, sir," said an old waiter who had been one of Bellamy's "runners" to the future Earl of Beaconsfield when dining at the House of Commons. He then asked him to repeat the last words of Chatham. Disraeli quoted the familiar "O my country!

how I leave my country!" Whereupon the interrogator told him that late one night he was summoned from bed by a messenger in a postchaise urging him to get some of the famous meat-pies and take them to Putney. "So I went," he continued, "and as we drove along he told me that Mr. Pitt had not been able to take any food, but had suddenly said, 'I think I could eat one of Bellamy's mutton-pies'. And so I was sent for post-haste. When we arrived Mr. Pitt was dead. Them was his last words: 'I think I could eat one of Bellamy's meat-pies.'" Even this, it will be noted, is not quite word perfect. Was it "mutton-pies" or "meat-pies?"

Canning, basing his evidence on the authority of the Bishop of Lincoln, stated that Chatham's dying exclamation was, "I am sorry to leave the country in such a position". Mr. Arthur Bryant, in *Years of Victory, 1802-1812*, submits that the old runner's evidence may have referred to an earlier stage of the illness when the doctors were endeavouring to overcome Chatham's aversion to meat. Historical evidence is by no means easy to sift.

Incidentally it may be added that a missing bottle of medicine had much to do with the apoplectic fit which struck down Chatham in the House of Lords. He had brought a bottle of julep with him, failed to find it, and began his oration. He afterwards told Dr. Addington that the anxiety caused by his wish to speak on the further prosecution of hostilities with America and his inability to find the truant dose were responsible for the attack. He later found the bottle in another pocket. Something more will be said on the accidental in history a little later.

Linking yesterday with today, I will just add that the murky city of Pittsburg, which contributed so much to the war effort, was named in honour of William Pitt the Elder by George Washington. The presence of United States fighting men in Europe may perhaps forgive a further postscript. When it was proposed to place a statue of the Great Commoner in the national capital of the United States it was claimed that he had died for the American cause as truly as any patriot on the field of battle. The



House of Lords refused, as a body, to attend his public funeral, and George III regarded the vote on the matter as "offensive to me personally". But this rather impinges on the section dedicated to hero-worship.

Dr. G. M. Trevelyan, in his inaugural lecture as Regius Professor of Modern History in the University of Cambridge, was careful to emphasize that history "is rightly taught by the disclosure, *as far as is humanly possible*, of the truth about the past in all its variety of many-sidedness, in all its national and international aspects, and in many other aspects besides these two". The italics are mine. The phrase seems to sum up the situation for those who require the kind of proof that could alone persuade doubting Thomas.

The same eminent authority warns us against chasing what he regards as another will-o'-the-wisp: the attempt to deduce from the study of history causal laws of general application. "It is the business of the historian," he notes in *Clio*, "to generalise, and to guess as to cause and effect, but he should do it modestly and not call it 'science'. . . ." H. A. L. Fisher was of much the same opinion. He confessed that in writing his monumental *History of Europe* one intellectual excitement had been denied him. "Men wiser and more learned than I," he wrote, "have discerned in history a plot, a rhythm, a predetermined pattern. These harmonies are concealed from me. I can see only one emergency following upon another as wave follows upon wave, only one great fact with respect to which, since it is unique, there can be no generalizations, only one safe rule for the historian: that he should recognize in the development of human destinies the play of the contingent and the unforeseen. This is not a doctrine of cynicism and despair. The fact of progress is written plain and large on the page of history; but progress is not a law of nature. The ground gained by one generation may be lost by the next. The thoughts of men may flow into channels which lead to disaster and barbarism."

This, be it added, was penned in January, 1936. On the other hand, speaking ten years earlier, he cited several



instances of prescience. They included the prediction of the French Revolution by Lord Chesterfield over thirty years before it broke out in 1789, the foreseeing by Gambetta in the 'seventies of the nineteenth century that Serbia would prove the Achilles heel of the German Empire, and the remark of Lenin when in exile that he would be master of Russia as a sequel to a European war. At the same time Fisher suggested that war had been made so destructive to non-combatants that nations might well shrink from it. On the other hand, he added, China, formerly the most peace-loving community on earth, was supplied with arms for its civil wars through the failure, by the interested operation of armament concerns, of the Western Powers to ratify the Treaty of St. Germain's regulating the export of arms, which was signed in 1920.

As a pendant to this, it may be noted that the United Press issued data from Washington on the day after Japan attacked Honolulu in 1941 showing that the bombs which fell on that place were manufactured of metals sent from the United States. It instanced constantly-growing increases from 1937 to 1939. While scrap steel was embargoed in 1940, metals not classified as scrap, such as steel rails, were not included, and there was no restriction on the exporting of the former from the Philippines. In 1941 no fewer than 1,097,000 barrels of petrol were transported from the Land of the Stars and Stripes to the Empire of the Rising Sun.

Count Okuma, speaking in 1915, prophesied that "In the middle of the twentieth century Japan will meet Europe on the plains of Asia and wrest from her the mastery of the world". Seven years before the outbreak of the Second World War Mr. Winston Churchill referred to Hitler as "the moving impulse behind the German Government, and may be more than that very soon".

Lord Tweedsmuir, the John Buchan who was the first commoner to be chosen as Governor-General of Canada, while making concessions to every school of thought, uttered a word of warning against becoming too dogmatic about any principle of interpretation. According to him the wise

historian conceded the eternal presence of the irrational and the inexplicable. The rationalization of facts could be carried a long way, but some things could only be called accidents, and could not be explained by any logical terms. Instead of the causal he found the casual.

In other words, the only certainty is the certainty of uncertainty. Here Lord Tweedsmuir is at one with Sir Charles Oman. "I am no believer in any 'Philosophy of History,'" he tells us in *Memories of Victorian Oxford*. "History is really a series of happenings, not a logical process towards an inevitable end. It is full of unexpected turns, which could not have been foreseen by the wisest, and these turns have often been towards the worse instead of towards the better. Its 'might have been' and 'ifs' are as important to study, in many cases, as its record of what actually happened. To the observer it gave a series of warnings, if you will, but no guide to perfection. And to look at the world-record of the past ages gives no encouragement to enthusiasm, such as the nineteenth-century thinkers vaguely imagined. It may even lead to pessimism—such as that which was to be found in certain thinkers of the fifth or the fifteenth centuries, surveying what they conceived to be the end of order, and the imminence of moral and material breakdown—a sort of 'Ragnarok'. We know that feeling again today." The same authority writes on another page that he is "no worshipper of 'Progress', nor do I believe in enthusiasms as to the perfectibility of mankind, which have their roots in Rousseau's delusions as to the virtuous primitive society which was undermined by kings and priests".

Dr. Hendrik Willem Van Loon, whose popular surveys of many aspects of history have done much to bring about a renaissance of interest in the subject, approaches the matter from a different angle, but is non-committal as to whether mankind is advancing, using that term to denote a larger and more abundant life: "I sincerely believe in the evolutionary process as the basis of all growth. Only my sort of evolution does not go upward and onward, like a spiral staircase. Nothing quite as simple as that. It is more like the waves of

the sea. The wave starts. It gains in size and momentum. It reaches its peak, and is lost in a cloud of spray. Then it descends once more to a lower level, but immediately the process is repeated. It rises upward. It gains in strength. It reaches its peak, but when it bursts with a cloud of foam it has proceeded far beyond the spot where it was a moment ago. Human civilization seems to be subject to a similar law, never standing still for a single moment, ever and relentlessly moving forward."

The dictionary defines "progress" as a noun meaning a moving or going forward; movement onward, advance, growth, development. It does not appear to have the remotest philological affinity with optimism, which in its figurative sense is a disposition to take a hopeful view of things. Yet it seems scarcely credible that the one can exist for any length of time without the other. They are spiritual Siamese twins. There is still a disposition in certain quarters to believe in unending automatic progress; to agree with Tennyson that "through the ages one unceasing purpose runs". The idea is grateful and comforting, though it rather suggests that humanity need not exert itself unduly in the best of all possible worlds. A recent writer, albeit a theologian, warns us that "humanity moves by zigzags, in cycles, by way of complication, and indeed degenerates quite as often as, if not more often than, by advance". Seignobos said much the same thing. Lucretius, the Roman poet-philosopher, who lived in the first century B.C., appears to have coined the word in *De Rerum Natura*, but he used it in no sense of continuous advancement. Prof. J. B. Bury characterized belief in progress as "an act of faith", and gave it as his opinion that "it is impossible to be sure that civilization is moving in the right direction to realize this aim, *i.e.*, of a perfectly happy existence of all the inhabitants of the planet". A given phase of progress is best appraised in retrospect, when it has ceased to be such. Even then the question of whether the real or alleged moving forward was in the direction of the greatest good to the greatest number is often debatable: mechanical development is valueless or worse unless it makes for the amelioration of

human conditions. It must be change for the better. Even then we sacrifice to gain; we cannot consume all the fruits offered at so liberal a feast.

As I have instanced in *The Miracle of Man*, wireless telephony is a case in point. It has narrowed the world in distance and broadened it in outlook. It has saved blood and treasure, and contributed to murder on the high seas and the destruction of millions of pounds' worth of shipping and goods. It has given pleasure to millions, but made an incalculable number of young people decide that harmony via the ether is preferable to harmony by way of their own initiative. From the negative point of view much the same may be said of the gramophone; it eliminates crotchets and quavers, breves and semibreves, and the bugbear of practice. The price exacted is the indefinable, but by no means negligible, reward of personal effort and interpretation. Human nature is so constituted that it cannot appreciate something done for it so fully as something it does for itself. Of latter day marvels the cinema is not the least, but look on the other side of the screen. There you will see the flicker of the dying embers of the family hearth.

When both reader and writer are gathered to their fathers will be time enough for posterity to debate on progress as applied to these three phases of it. I accentuate the abuse, rather than the use, of radio, mechanical music, and pictured information and drama because we are all prone to overlook minus signs in the sum of advancement. Alfred Nobel thought that by making war more terrible he could abolish it. In less than a quarter of a century after his death and the bestowal of princely benefactions in behalf of peace, the world proved otherwise, and subsequently repeated the fallacy of the belief. Civil engineering is under a lasting debt of gratitude to the inventor of dynamite, but humanity cannot but regard ballistite as of the devil devilish.

"It is admitted," Lord Bryce observed, "that nearly every gain man makes is accomplished by some corresponding loss—perhaps a slight loss, yet a loss." This is paralleled by the observation of Charles H. Parsons that "actual

decay may alternate with progress, and even true progress implies some admixture of decay". Life itself, as Raphael Meldola puts it, is a "stable instability". Mazzini, the prophet of united Italy, held a brief for what he termed "the infallibility involved in the idea of progression", that the whole history of mankind was the repetition, varying according to the diversity of the times, of the petition "Thy kingdom come on earth as it is in Heaven". He believed that Providence had designed an educational plan for the continued development of humanity by a collective labour. "To progress," he avowed, "you must show yourselves capable of progressing."

While he was working for the unification of Italy, Mazzini was also peering into the future, and visualizing, through the mists, a Europe at harmony. "The map of Europe will be remade," he writes. "The countries of the people will rise, defined by the voice of the free, upon the ruins of the countries of kings and privileged castes. Between these countries will be harmony and brotherhood. And then the work of Humanity for the general amelioration, for the discovery and application of the real law of life, carried on in association and distributed according to local capacities, will be accomplished by peaceful and progressive development." Most emphatically did he agree with St. Paul that "we are members one of another". Most emphatically did he disagree with his friend Carlyle that universal history is at bottom the history of the accomplishments of great men, but he made the concession that individuals of outstanding genius and large heart sow the seeds of a new degree of progress in the world, although they bear fruit only after many years.

An anonymous writer has finely said that "the idea of progress was the refuge men discovered when the idea of Providence was shaken". The early Christians looked forward to a speedy second coming of their Master. Quite naturally they spent a considerable amount of their energies on preaching a Gospel that mainly centred on preparations for a happier life in the hereafter. The "life more abundantly" that Christ promised was not apparently associated



in their minds with any idea of progress as we conceive it. Life was the infants' class of a preparatory school and no more; a necessary nuisance, for without bearing the cross there was no gaining the crown. Since then, though not without much misgiving, this notion has undergone considerable development. The Church, to her everlasting credit, carefully guarded the flickering candle of culture during the Dark Ages, though it was long before she admitted that Science might be a facet of a many-sided diamond of great price. While it would be incorrect to say that the two now form a working partnership, the antagonism that was once so evident is virtually a thing of the past. Christians slaughter each other for reasons other than disputation about the precise meanings of texts in Holy Writ. Respect is paid to opinion, however arguable it may be. The liberal position maintains that no line has ever succeeded in plumbing the well of truth. Dogmatic generalizations, however sincerely made, are usually ill-advised.

I think a consensus of opinion would prove a belief in the continuance of some kind of progress, a stream by no means always in spate, and sometimes no more than a faint and scarcely discernible trickle. "If knowledge," as Dr. F. S. Marvin, Provost of Eton, pointed out, "has demonstrably and, on the whole, steadily grown from prehistoric times, and has been accompanied by an average increase of mental capacity, it seems a reasonable conclusion, similar to any other biological law, that, given an approximately similar environment, the growth will persist. This is, in fact, the finest basis of a belief in Progress—the obvious growth of collective knowledge and intellectual power in mankind. Whether a growth could be detected in the average individual as well as in the mass is a different and highly complicated problem about which, however, we need not assume a negative conclusion. Taking, therefore, Progress to consist primarily in the more or less continuous enlargement of the human soul, this at once becomes the dominating note in history. The growth of science, or organized knowledge, is the most salient and most easily measured feature of the evolution. But it is correlated on other sides of his being



with other changes, with moral, political, and artistic aptitudes, which do not invariably show so clear an advance as his knowledge, but on the whole conform to the idea of Progress if we define it as a growth of soul. To trace this development in history, and to realize it fully in thought, is the supreme and growing task of the human mind."

Evolution is often wrongly associated with a necessarily upward urge, a kind of semi-automatic march towards perfection. It may be retrogression. Dr. W. R. Matthews, Dean of St. Paul's, has gone so far as to assure us that "The power of the human mind has no assignable limit", an enthusiastic opinion somewhat discounted by Lord Bryce's warning that "an ice age might await the mind of man". The Dean's predecessor, Dr. W. R. Inge, points out that "There is such a thing as progress in the direction of evil, as when a disease is said to be progressing. The German war-machine was as much a product of evolution as the Church Congress. To those who think that the mere lapse of time must eventually bring about the Golden Age, the devil replies, 'You forget that I am evolving too'. It is not even certain that we can assert evolution in spiritual values. . . . We must not deify evolution. Evolution is always of finite things within a whole. We cannot infer from the fact of human progress within the historical period that the whole creation is in progress of development toward 'one far-off divine event'." The time is not so far back when a learned professor of theology at Oxford argued that fossils found in sedimentary rocks were no evidence of antiquity, but were put there by Satan for the purpose of testing faith in the Bible.

To Sir J. Arthur Thomson the greatest fact about organic evolution was that as we surveyed the ascent of life we saw the gradual emancipation of mind, the crowning wonder of which was man, who was increasingly making the world intelligible, and would never give up the attempt to make it rationalizable. A sinister picture is painted by Dr. Charles Davenport, a leading geneticist of the Carnegie Institution of Washington, who points out that while man

can control nature in certain directions, it is within the range of possibility that a mutation might arise in a filterable virus that would wipe out human life.

Such terms as the "struggle for existence" and the "survival of the fittest", neither of which was used by Darwin, have led to considerable mischief. In the opinion of Prof. D. L. Mackinnon, "they are too often used to justify the oppression of the poor by the rich, of the weak by the strong, and as the great justification for war. Even after our recent experiences (viz. the First World War), there are plenty of people who regard war as a justifiable form of struggle for existence in modern society, since it is 'natural', they say, and must therefore determine by law the survival of the fittest. Whereas while pugnacity may be natural, we all know perfectly well that, under modern conditions, what war leads to is merely the momentary triumph of the richer nation, and the survival within both combatant nations of the feeblest and the oldest male stock". The thinnest veneer in the world is civilization, although it has yet to be proved whether Emerson's dictum that the human race will die of it is correct or otherwise. "I am convinced," Grey remarked in 1921, "that if we had another war twenty years hence it would be infinitely worse than the last one; it would destroy the civilization of Europe."

Prof. S. de Madariaga asserts that "Construction has a purpose and destruction has none". This is not strictly correct. Destruction may have a perfectly legitimate purpose if the intention is to build anew or eliminate the unnecessary. The aim of the Axis Powers was not entirely negative. From their point of view, which we believe to be as distorted as it was inhuman and therefore unnatural, the Second World War was waged by them for certain specific purposes. Those purposes include the gathering into one group of the Germans, the alleged Master People, the obtaining of territory for their expansion, and the propagation of a Pure Race, which we know to be absurd. The ambition of Italy was to gain accessions to her Colonial Empire and the turning of the Mediterranean into an Italian lake. Japan's New Order is the supremacy of the Mikado,

the god-king, in eastern Asia. The whole programme, which ultimately included the conquest of the world by one of the three partners—for it is manifestly absurd to think that the Nazis would not have fought their allies as soon as convenient had they been given the opportunity—was dominated by the spirit of revenge. On the part of Germany because of her military defeat in 1918 and her political defeat at Versailles in 1919; on that of Italy and of Japan because they considered that they were badly treated by the Peace Conference and the League of Nations.

"The bloody wild beast in man" has yet to be tamed, evolution or no evolution. Mr. Stanley (now Earl) Baldwin paraphrased Stevenson when, following the signature of the Kellogg Pact in 1928, he asserted that "If the State is to survive the tiger in us must be eliminated". It is scarcely likely to depart so long as militarism is inculcated as a virtue. "War alone," said Mussolini, "brings up to its highest tension all human energy, and puts the stamp of nobility upon the peoples who have the courage to meet it." Montaigne, who could tour Tyrol and the Alps without thrilling at their beauties but could not refrain from remarking on the ugliness of German women, and from whom Shakespeare borrowed inspiration, puzzled over this phase of man's activities. "As for war, which is the greatest and most glorious of all human actions," notes this student of men and of motives, "I would fain know whether we use it for an argument of some prerogative, or, on the contrary, for a testimony of our imbecility and imperfection; for, in truth, the science we use to defeat and kill one another, to spoil and utterly to overthrow our own kind, seems to have not much in it that should make it to be wished-for by the beasts, that have it not."

The great essayist, who was born four hundred years ago and lived in a time of constant conflict and civil turmoil, had these words inscribed on one of the beams of his library: "I do not understand, I pause, I examine"; a not unworthy discipline for the student of history. He might also remember the axiom of E. M. Remarque that what the world lacks most is a certain average goodness. Bitter truth is mirrored

in the contention of Prof. H. B. Alexander that in 1914, "In an hour when men had their utmost need of a full intelligence, an age which had boasted itself intellectually above all ages fell hapless into the Abyss". There was less excuse for the sequel. "You have been Warned" was painted as clearly as any notice board stuck up for unheeding motorists who disregard the first danger signal on a road in an unsafe condition.

### CHAPTER III

## PROVIDENCE AND GREAT MEN

HAS history a deep inner meaning that has eluded our powers of penetration? The word "providential" has not been deleted from the dictionary. In this sense we speak of the miracle of Dunkirk, when over 335,000 tattered units of a battered army were rescued when there was every reason to believe that those who escaped death would be captured. All that can be said with any degree of certainty is that history neither rules out Providence nor positively confirms the existence of a Higher Power.

To deny would be to answer with a negative what cannot be proven; to affirm would be to assert what cannot be confirmed beyond possibility of doubt. The chemist can use litmus paper and ascertain without fear of contradiction that this liquid is alkaline and that solution is acid. We cannot search and find God by any such simple process. To the believer history may well be regarded as an appendix to the Scriptures, the continuation of a record of a purpose imperfectly understood and carried out in a myriad different and apparently conflicting ways. There are those who humbly hope that their infinitesimal contribution to the things of good report may enable them to touch the fringe of God's garment, and add, by however imperceptible a push, to the momentum of spiritual progress as they understand it. There are others who have no such belief. "All epochs," as Turgot discoursed at the Sorbonne in 1750, "are fastened together by a sequence of causes and effects, linking the condition of the world to all the conditions that have gone before it."

The apparently trivial is sometimes the intensely significant. Louis XVI might have saved his head and his crown and the blood of many of his subjects had a cloud hidden the face of the sun on the 21st June, 1791. When the King and the royal family were fleeing the country, with the



blinds of the coach drawn to screen them from prying eyes, the little Dauphin complained of the heat. Louis lowered the windows and forgot to adjust the blinds. At the post-house at Sainte Menehould payment was made for fresh horses. Contemporary records differ as to whether a coin or paper money was used, but it enabled the recipient, Jean Baptiste Drouet, to recognize the monarch. A blazing sun, a child's perfectly reasonable request, and a man's forgetfulness changed the course of history.

In 1643, when civil war was raging in England and typhus in London, Charles I thought it well to abandon his plan of advancing on the capital. Had the Cavaliers marched, another royal head might not have fallen and the records would not be as they are. Destiny, or whatever you care to call it, was deflected by the utterly unsuspected machinations of the louse, which propagates typhus. Passed on by the rat flea to man, it was not until 1909 that Charles Nicolle discovered that transmission is also from man to man. Typhus fought against Napoleon in his disastrous Russian campaign. It competes with battle in the piling up of casualties. In the First World War disease of various kinds killed more United States troops than were killed in action. The numbers were 56,991 and 48,009 respectively.

Weather had something to do with Napoleon's defeat in 1812, though actually winter was later in coming than was usual. The Polish plan of operations in 1939 was based in part on the belief that with the autumn rains war by machine would be slowed down because the caterpillar tracks of tank and armoured vehicle would slip and sink in mud. Then the more manageable cavalry would complete the destruction of the German army. The heavens were as brass. Prayers for torrential downpours went up from a million hearts. The Nazis were too speedy, and the answer to the petitions too tardy. Poland fell. The country which had proved so delectable a dish to hungry neighbours in 1772, 1793 and 1795 was again carved up.

Much used to be made of the miracle of the winds, particularly of those that blew when the proselytizing zeal of Philip II led him to launch the Spanish Armada against



England in 1588, and the Protestant wind that swept the craft of William of Orange into Brixham harbour a hundred years later on a more important 5th of November than that usually celebrated by boys of various ages. In *Little Arthur's History of England*, a primer which had much popularity following its publication in 1836, Lady Callcott informed her juvenile readers as follows: "Oh, how anxious everybody in England was, when the news came that the great armada was at sea, and sailing very near us! But it pleased God to save England. Soon after the Spanish fleet set sail a great storm arose, and many of the ships were so damaged that they could not come to England at all. When the others did come, Queen Elizabeth's fleet met them, and after fighting for several days beat them; and not one ever got to England to land Spanish soldiers. Twelve of them were taken or destroyed; and another storm, greater than the first, sank a great many and wrecked others, so that of all Philip's great fleet and army, only half could get back to Spain; and they were so tired and so hurt that he never could get them together again to attack England."

It is no part of the historian's job to jeer or sneer at the work of those who performed their task with less accurate and critical apparatus than that with which he is privileged to work, though perhaps he may indulge a sly smile in the solitude of his study. Detachments were dispersed by heavy weather off Land's End on the first abortive starting, but when the fleet finally sailed from Corunna it was as "imposing" as when it had left the Tagus, "better supplied and sufficiently manned", according to Mr. Richard Hale, a recognized authority. On July 29th, 1588, when the Armada was off the coast of Flanders, the wind swung round to the north-west, enabling the English to put themselves in a position that helped them to win the battle of Gravelines. On the following day the wind changed to south-east, affording the battered Spanish vessels an opportunity to get away. They sailed into the Atlantic by rounding the north of Scotland. There was heavy weather on occasion, but the Armada was already a beaten fleet before storm was added to stress. When Elizabeth caused a medal

to be struck with the words "God blew with His wind, and they were scattered", she was perfectly sincere up to a point. The Armada was scattered, but it had been defeated previously. Philip, making the best of a bad job, told those who returned, "I sent you forth to fight with men and not with the elements". Lord Hankey draws attention to the large part that fortune plays in human affairs, especially in war, and mentions that Machiavelli estimated the part of fortune at one-half and Frederick the Great at three-quarters.

Mention of William III suggests an important factor in history on which much has been said and written, namely the influence of what Carlyle termed Great Men. The Sage of Chelsea did not see fit, for whatever reason, to include Dutch William among his heroes, although Macaulay did. The second Earl of Selborne, when High Commissioner for South Africa, used to chat with Boer friends about the Prince of Orange who was also King of Great Britain and Ireland. He pointed out that the system of Parliamentary government with which South Africa had been endowed dated from William's time, whereupon "the Boers' interest became quickened, and thoughts and aspirations and ideals which had never before occurred to them began to shape themselves in their minds. It softened the bitterness of defeat to remember that the time had been when England, in her extremity, had looked to Holland for a sovereign". Every historical link was of great value when endeavours were being made to smooth away and remove misunderstandings between the two peoples that had lasted for many generations. Loyal South Africans, in more recent hours of Britain's dire peril, did not hesitate to step forward and fight for the country with whom they had warred from 1899 to 1902.

In using the term Great Men, let it be said at once that the adjective is used in the sense of outstanding achievements and not necessarily of spiritual values. Lord Acton said that nearly all great men were bad men, and he also spoke of "the general wickedness of men in authority". If, like Disraeli, he was on the side of the angels, he felt that

the majority of folk whose names figure in school textbooks were in the opposite camp. Statues of many of the possessors of conspicuous names, judged by ordinary decent standards, would be placed in a Rogues' Gallery rather than in a Hall of Fame. The two chief personalities associated with our recent discontents are Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini, neither of whom could be regarded as exemplars on which to base one's own conduct. Even eminent investigators disagree on essential matters. Acton, for instance, did not believe in the sincerity of Savonarola, while Mandell Creighton did. Prof. R. B. Mowat points out in *The American Venture* that the time of the American Revolution was a period of great men such as Washington, Jefferson and Franklin. "Yet," he adds, "it is not in the great men, magnificent though their achievement is, that the core of the history of the American people lies, but in the plain folk; it is these who have, on the whole, dominated the trend of affairs in the United States. This makes American history unique among, at any rate, the histories of Great Powers."

There is a school of thought which holds that individuals play but a small part in the shaping of events; that similar happenings would have occurred had the men primarily associated with them never been born. This almost postulates that you can have effect without cause. The Second World War might have afflicted the nations had no vagrant house-painter bestirred himself and been content to pass his days in a Vienna doss-house. That is admitted, but Germany's revenge would not have taken the same shape but for certain small beginnings in a Bavarian beer-hall, the writing of *Mein Kampf*, and husky brawlings that bestirred the masses and ultimately secured the adhesion of the classes. Even now we have no positive evidence how far Hitler dominated the German Army or how far the German Army dominated him. There is a mass of newspaper and literary material of a contradictory kind on this point, to be sifted and retained or discarded when more positive evidence is brought to light. Whatever the verdict as to this may be, even though the Führer be relegated to the position of a

tool, it will be admitted that the accumulation of facts is scarcely likely to deny the belief that he was something more than a cypher, and that he undoubtedly exercised considerably more power than many a crowned head. Even now we have an inkling of his relations with the military. That Hitler could get rid of generals and of intimates who fell out of favour is at least an indication of his rule. Sometimes these personages were quietly dropped, and on occasion they were what the Russians termed "liquidated", which is a polite way of saying exterminated. There does not appear to be much doubt about the despotism exercised by certain other contemporary figures.

To the ordinary mind every outstanding event is associated with an individual. He may be likened to the centre of a circle. What he puts in train is the circumference. Or, to use another simile, he flings a stone into the pond of circumstance and is therefore the first cause of the succeeding and widening ripples, the ultimate extent of which he cannot positively foresee. Much play is often made, after the event, of the inevitable. In such matters there is none of the certainty of result that follows the placing of one's finger on a red hot poker.

Rousseau, who was not bloody-minded, although he did not hesitate to abandon his infants, knowing full well that there was a reasonable likelihood of their being found alive, would scarcely have penned his books had he foreseen the tragic sequel. Indignation at the general condition of things inflamed his soul, and doubtless he unconsciously expressed the thoughts of many, but there is nothing to suggest that he intended his invective to lead to vindictive revolution. In his *Discourse on Inequality* he bluntly informed his readers that he put aside all facts. His *Social Contract*, based on the theme of "the sovereignty of the people", was a scheme of government for a city of 20,000 inhabitants, and not for a country of the size of France, let alone for a continent. Many of the fiery iconoclasts of Paris afterwards regarded it with the fanaticism of the mentally deranged. The book is a collection of paradoxes that proves nothing. Rousseau,

who proclaimed that a true democracy "never has existed and never will", was one of the heroes of a democratic revolt that shook the world. Its tremors are still felt. Its immediate results were to shackle France and much of Europe with the despotism of Napoleon, and to lead to the resurgence of Prussia.

Had statesmen outside of Germany studied history and taken its lessons to heart they would have found an indication of what was likely to succeed the crowning event of 1918. History may not repeat itself, but it has parallels, or as Sabatier says, "it resembles itself sometimes, it repeats itself never". Scharnhorst, following the humiliation of his country by the Emperor of the French, passed thousands of men through the army while retaining the normal strength allowed by Napoleon. Germany, unlike the gentlemen of Versailles and the League of Nations, did not forget her past. Under various disguises she raised a formidable host of workers and warriors that created the mighty war machine of 1939. The 42,000 men allowed in 1808 became 150,000 trained men in 1813; the 100,000 men and 4,000 officers allotted by the Peace Treaty of 1919 increased to probably 2,400,000 on partial mobilization just previous to the beginning of the Second World War.

"Let my son often read and reflect on history," counselled the dying Napoleon; "this is the only true philosophy." On another occasion he referred to it as "the torch of truth, the destroyer of prejudice". These would seem to discount his remark that it was "but a fiction agreed upon". Mr. Frederick C. Oechsner, for twelve years a keen observer of affairs in central Europe, tells us that Hitler had undoubtedly assimilated most of the 7,000 books on military matters that lined his library. The type of reading indulged in by the five Prime Ministers of our own time, two of whom wrote valuable books on certain phases of history, may be instructive.

Great men in nations, according to the late Earl Lloyd George, are like mountains, they attract and assemble the vitalising elements in the heavens and distribute them in the valleys and plains so as to irrigate the land with their



vitalising qualities. A world without them would be either a desert or a morass. The first book that interested him outside his school books was Rollin's *Ancient History*, and he read and re-read Macaulay "with rapture". Speaking in 1923, when decrees of the League of Nations had been flouted by some of its members, he gave it as his opinion that no new organization for interpreting international right was of the slightest use unless there was a trained, disciplined, educated public opinion sustaining it. "The fact of the matter is," he suggested, "man is only half civilized. In international relations he is still a savage. There has to be a very different attitude in the nations towards one another. You must civilize mankind in its international relations. . . . You must introduce into the relations of nations the principle of the moral law. Thou shalt not steal, shalt not kill, which are the principles of the moral law in individual relations, should be introduced into international relations, and until you do that there will be no peace on earth. There is no nation on earth which has not committed crimes of which it ought to be ashamed."

Lloyd George's own contributions to the quest for light on events in living memory, other than those interred in the dusty files of newspapers, are his *War Memoirs*, in which he defended his own conduct during the First World War, added to or detracted from the reputations of many personages who loomed large in the public eye, and revealed many well-guarded secrets. In the first volume, which was published almost six years, to the day, before the beginning of the Second World War, the author quoted part of his speech delivered in the House of Commons on December 20th, 1915, when he avowed that the footsteps of the Allies had been dogged by the mocking spectre of "too late". That opinion he confirmed "after a careful perusal of all the documents and histories written on the subject from every point of view". There surely was the warning of the spoken and the written word, yet it passed unheeded when the shadow of a greater peril clouded the sun. It is an old tale, this ingrained characteristic of the British. William III complained of it in a letter written in 1690, over 250 years



ago, to William Bentinck: "One loses patience at seeing the slowness of the people here. . . . Although I press from morning to night, I cannot get things done."

Not, be it added, that Lloyd George was one of those who foresaw the Nazi menace, at any rate in 1936, when he visited the Third Reich. "Germany does not want war," he told Britain on his return. "Hitler does not want war. He is a most remarkable personality, one of the greatest I have ever met in the whole of my life, and I have met some very great men." As to the attitude of the German people towards Hindenburg's successor, he stated that it amounted almost to worship, and that he had never seen anything like it.

In his youth Ramsay MacDonald read Herodotus, the Greek historian, in translation, the gift of a scholar who was also a rags-and-bones merchant, and confessed to an interest in geology. In 1932 Dr. Karl Silex, in *Patriot MacDonald, der Romantiker von Downing Street*, wrote that England was sending the subject of his biography, "this unique blend of egoism and idealism", on a great mission of world peace. Fate was offering him the opportunity to become a world leader. "If he does not take it the world will no longer need him, nor will England." While in America discussing the matter with President Hoover, MacDonald remarked that he was "sure that everybody who is interested in foreign relations, at any rate occasionally, reads his Macaulay". He revelled in Scott, made a study of fiery John Knox and his times, and, according to Sir Philip Gibbs, was "a reader of old books". Of the works which bear MacDonald's name as author, including studies on socialism and a number of volumes on travel, the first dealt with the South African War, and was published in 1902.

Earl Baldwin's introduction to history was Scott's *Tales of a Grandfather*, which confirmed him in the view that "the best and most readable history is that written with the strongest bias". Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* and the pictures in Berners' *Froissart* were other favourites of his childhood. "You may stuff yourselves with Stubbs and you may know everything

about the rise of the British Constitution in Plantagenet times," he remarked on one occasion, "but how much less a man you are if you are not equally familiar with Piers Plowman and know that the Englishman of Plantagenet days is the same Englishman with whom you have to work today—the same Englishman in his strength and in his weakness, in his humour and in his heroism, the Englishman immutable and determined." Those who have read the speeches and addresses collected in *Our Inheritance* and *On England* will doubtless recollect the many historical allusions in them. The future Earl admired and read the *Odyssey*, the *Aeneid* and Horace, and had almost unbounded admiration for the achievements of the Roman Empire of classic times. He declared that to be ignorant of its history was to be without that sense of perspective in viewing both the change of events and their day-to-day reactions which was essential to see Britain's national life, and to see it whole. "Here," he added, "is the greatest, most fascinating problem in all history for the scholar and the statesman. Why did the Empire come into existence at all, and why, having come into existence, did it perish?"

In an address delivered in 1925 as Rector of Edinburgh University, Earl Baldwin discoursed to the students on truth and politics. It is a subject on which many statesmen have spoken. He listed the difficulties very fairly, pointing out that though it has been accepted through the ages that half a loaf is better than no bread, half a truth was not only not better than no truth, it was worse than many lies, and the slave of lies and half-truths was ignorance. In the arena of international rivalry and conflict men had placed patriotism above truthfulness as the indispensable virtue of statesmen. Further, there was the pressure laid upon the politician in a democratic State to speak while important negotiations were in progress, however inconvenient the moment. The result was inevitably to place a veto on complete frankness, and to tempt recourse to words that were nebulous, hesitating, ambiguous, or misleading. Morley touched on the matter when speaking as Chancellor of the University of Manchester in 1912, stating that the most dogmatic agreed

that truth was most prodigiously hard to find, an opinion upheld in 1914 by Lord Haldane when delivering the Creighton Lecture at University College, London, on "The Meaning of Truth in History". Sir Edward (later Viscount) Grey expressed the opinion that the difficulty, so far as diplomacy was concerned, was not to tell the truth, but to get the truth believed when it was told. Even if he spoke in a facetious way, the suggestion is worthy of consideration.

Mr. Winston Churchill raised a nice point when addressing the House of Commons in November, 1942, on deceiving the enemy. "'Why, then' it will be said, 'did you allow false hopes to be raised in Russian breasts? Why, then, did you agree with the United States and Russia to a communiqué which spoke of a second front in Europe in 1942?' I must say, quite frankly, that I hold it perfectly justifiable to deceive the enemy, even if at the same time your own people are for a while misled. There is one thing, however, which you must never do, and that is mislead your allies."

One cannot but wonder whether, in the difficult days of 1935, the Mr. Baldwin of yesteryear remembered the vexatious problem he had put to the hard-headed and logical Scottish youth. "No Government in this country", he said in May of that year, "could live a day that was content to have an air force of any inferiority to any country within striking distance of our shores." The inference was that Britain possessed equality. We do not know sufficient of the Laval-Hoare plan to settle the Italo-Abyssinian War to arrive at a verdict regarding it, but we do know that Mr. Baldwin was returned to power in the following November on declarations of fidelity to the League of Nations and collective security. Well aware "that Germany was rearming and that we must rearm, does anybody think that this pacific democracy would have rallied to that cry at that moment? I cannot think of anything that would have made the loss of the election from my point of view more certain". Thus the truth leaked out in 1936. The full story of the abdication of Edward VIII is behind sealed lips. Democracy is largely a theory.

Mr. Baldwin's solution of the problem of the fall of Rome was based on the writings of Ammianus Marcellinus, who asserted that the Roman word could no longer be trusted. "This is to me," the Prime Minister commented, "a far more significant portent than the aggregation of the population in cities, the immense luxury and the exhaustion of the permanent sources of wealth, all of which combined to sap that very character whose continued existence was necessary for the life of the State."

Lloyd George, a relentless critic of other people's reputations, summed up Neville Chamberlain as of the type "indispensable for filling insubordinate posts". He was a Shakespearian student of no mean distinction. His successor has always been devoted to history, of which he has been reader, writer and maker. The biography of his father, Lord Randolph Churchill, and that of his ancestor Marlborough, are outstanding works, while *The World Crisis* is one of the most important books on the events of 1914-19. In the light of subsequent happenings it is interesting to read two pregnant sentences on the Peace Conference: "The influence of mighty, detached, and well-meaning America upon the European settlement was a precious agency of hope. It was largely squandered in sterile conflicts and half-instructed and half-pursued interferences."

That the reading of this galaxy of statesmen had some kind of influence on their outlook can scarcely be doubted. Otherwise we are forced to the conclusion that the books they perused had nothing more than an entertainment value, an obviously absurd suggestion considering the nature of some of the works. Consciously or unconsciously, man being an imitative animal, they must have imbibed something of the spirit of their heroes. The inspiration of Marlborough, it may be surmised, gave encouragement to Mr. Churchill in his hours of sweat, and blood, and tears. That such supreme egoists as Hitler and Göring pleaded guilty to so human a weakness as hero-worship is strange but true. The Führer was a fervent admirer of Frederick the Great. He offered incense at no other shrine. Göring's adoration was divided. He had a trinity of celebrities deemed worthy

of devotion. The triad includes the cynical King of Prussia, but embraced the elder von Moltke and Napoleon. Each was a militant maker of misery, and none too scrupulous. Their portraits were given places of honour in the room of Carin Hall where staff conferences were held.

The double preference for Frederick the Great is not surprising. He made war a trade, and helped himself liberally to other people's possessions, including a slice of Poland, thus setting a precedent. "Take what you can; you are never wrong unless you are obliged to give it back." Such was his advice, and Hitler and his chief confederate followed it. The crafty monarch, who loved only his dogs, was referred to in German newspapers as "the Führer's illustrious predecessor." Judged by results, Hitler's qualities as a soldier were not outstanding.

In three of his dislikes Hitler emulated both Frederick and Napoleon. He hated tobacco, heavy eating and drinking. Napoleon was presented with a beautiful pipe by the Turkish Ambassador. He took one deep draw, swallowed the smoke, flung the gift at the giver, and called him by a very inelegant name. In later years Hitler fashioned his hair like the little Corsican, but in 1924, when he began *Mein Kampf*, he had it brushed back. Napoleon also started writing in prison, but his efforts were less successful.

He, in his turn, esteemed Frederick, whose tomb he visited at Potsdam. As a memento he took his hero's sword and sent it to Paris for safe keeping in the Invalides. He paid a back-handed compliment to the warrior king's troops. "I always admired Frederick II," he avowed, "but I admire him twice as much since I have seen what kind of men they were with which he resisted Austrians, French and Russians." It has been suggested that some of the magnificent pictures and tapestries that adorned Berchtesgaden, the Chancellery and Carin Hall were obtained in the same easy manner as Frederick's sword.

When Friedrich Ebert, the sometime saddler, was President of the German Reich, a film featuring Frederick's career, under the title *Fredericus Rex*, was shown in Berlin.



It aroused such amazing enthusiasm, and drew such frenzied crowds, that police reserves had to be called out to keep would-be patrons from storming the box-office. At Leipsic a short play called *The School of the World*, written by Frederick, was also an astonishing success. Our old Fritz was applauded to the echo. Hitler noted these things for future guidance, and profited by them.

Count von Moltke was, of course, the hero of the Franco-Prussian War. One story is told of him which doubtless appealed with special force to Göring. In May, 1870, after a strenuous spell of work, Moltke asked King William to grant him leave of absence for a fortnight. A few days after his departure, von Roon handed an important document to the monarch. "I should like to hear what von Moltke says about the matter," remarked the recipient after he had read the communication.

For over a week the kingdom was searched for the missing strategist, but without result. On his return William asked for an explanation. "I was in France, sire," he answered. "Ah, amusing yourself in Paris?" "Not at all, sire," was the reply. "I was at Metz and Belfort. We have very good plans of the fortifications there, but I wished to see with my own eyes their strong points and their weak points." Two months later the war started. Both places fell into the hands of the besiegers.

Napoleon attempted to make himself dictator of Europe. With the idea of making the continent self-contained, of establishing a New Order, he became friendly with Russia. Hitler followed suit. Napoleon and Alexander quarrelled. In endeavouring to teach his former ally a lesson the Emperor of the French brought about the disaster which hastened the end of his rule. We are unaware of the circumstances which caused Hitler to break off his relationship with Stalin, but we know the sequel. History supplied a similar conclusion. Perhaps the wise man has no hero. Haldane's idea of Kaiser William II was that he was always asking himself, "Am I of the stuff of Frederick the Great?" Carlyle, who groaned for fourteen wearisome years on the half dozen volumes of his *History of Friedrich II of Prussia, called Frederick the*

*Great*, is a favourite of the Japanese, the Germans and the Italians, which is significant. William II placed a wreath on the grave at Ecclefechan on the occasion of the Carlyle centenary in 1895.

Haldane, with more excuse than those in office who might reasonably have been expected to glimpse coming events as their shadows grew in size and outline, failed to perceive that perhaps the leopard might not change his spots. In *Before the War*, published in 1920, he gave our former and future enemy the benefit of the doubt. He wrote that he did not think that for generations to come Germany would dream of building on military foundations: "Her people have had a lesson in the overwhelming forces which are inevitably called into action where there is a brutal indifference to the moral rights of others. What remains to her is that which she has inherited and preserved of the results of the great advancement in knowledge which began under the inspiration of Lessing and Kant, and culminated in the teachings of Goethe and Schiller and of the thinkers who were their contemporaries. . . . Today there are few men of great stature in Germany; there are, indeed, few men of genius anywhere in the world. But Germany still has a high level of science, and of recent years she has produced great captains of industry. She is likely to be heard of again in a field of activity that probably will not include devotion to military affairs in the old way."

Other philosophies and a pagan ideology, a perverted science and a prostituted industry, showed that the nation retained its predatory inclinations. Well might the noble Viscount avow at a later date than the future of his country depended upon knowledge. Foch, with keener insight, prophesied that Europe's next great war would start in Poland, as in fact it did.

Frederick, whose gospel was expediency, whose creed was Might is Right, and whose belief was that of a non-committal freethinker, was no bigot in his irreligion. In matters of belief he wished his subjects to follow their own inclination: "The people's conceptions of God and godly things cannot be the subject of a coercive law." In this

Hitler did not see eye to eye with his hero. He would have all mental and material things cast in a mould as inflexible as a steel ingot. A pinch of incense offered to the Roman Emperor would have saved the early Christians; a promise not to criticize the supremacy of the State would have spared many from the horrors of the internment camp.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE DISTORTION OF HISTORY

THE doctoring, faking, distortion and tainting of history is an ancient trick with a modern application. In 1935 the Association of German History Teachers was dissolved and the Nazi Teachers' Association took on the definite task of "intensifying the teaching of history in the Third Reich, and of inspiring it with the Nazi spirit". Mayor William Hale Thompson, of Chicago, familiarly known as "Big Bill" Thompson, had previously waged a campaign against the use in American public schools of textbooks which he alleged to be pro-British. Not that works published in the United States were above suspicion. One of them, used in schools in the state of Victoria, Australia, was adversely criticized because, among other things, it asserted that the United States was the only great Power that fought in the First World War without demanding or desiring territorial gains. "She should be credited," ran one passage, "with a loftiness of purpose and unselfishness that could rarely be matched in all history."

There was something of a historical heresy hunt when a memorandum entitled *Declaration on the Schools of Britain and the Peace of the World*, issued by the League of Nations Union, suggested that history should be taught from an international rather than from a national point of view. The ninth session of the International Committee for Intellectual Co-operation, held at Geneva in 1927, also maintained that while the first principle of sound education was the imbuing of a child with a deep and lasting affection for its family and country, true patriotism understood the patriotism of others and a recognition of the constant necessity for co-operation. The memorandum, which had an appendix on the international aspects of history by Mr. F. S. Marvin, suggested to its critics "the immediate prospect of a new compulsory propaganda to be launched on the

country 'through our schools', to quote Prof. J. L. Morison, of Armstrong College, and led to considerable controversy. The situation was summed up by Sir Gilbert Murray, who submitted that "in most European countries the Minister of Public Instruction issues an order that the League should be taught in schools, and immediately it is taught. No propaganda is necessary. In England it will only be taught as each local education authority, and one might almost say each individual teacher, is gradually convinced that such teaching is a good thing, and to try to convince them is 'propaganda'."

The somewhat anomalous position of the former Board of Education was recently emphasized when a Member of Parliament alleged that a certain book used in schools gave a false account of modern Russian history, and asked for its withdrawal from grant-aided schools. The answer for the Board was that their policy was to leave the choice of books to the responsible local Educational Authority, and they saw no ground for changing it.

Even so late as 1928 a lower school primer issued for compulsory use to every school in Northern and Middle China by the National Government contained such statements as "The foreigners treat the Chinese like rats and vermin", and that economic ills were caused "by foreign merchants who drain China of all its silver treasure".

In Italy State-produced books for schools made their appearance in 1930. They were clever in a subtle way. Here is an extract from the story of the march on Rome in 1922, though no mention is made of the "leader" having travelled in a sleeping-car on the railway:

"Italy, a hundred years ago divided and enslaved, is today one of the great Powers of the world, presenting an admirable spectacle of discipline, work and faith. The heroes and martyrs of the Risorgimento, of the Great War and the Fascist Revolution have made our country free, united, prosperous and strong. It is now your turn to grow up healthy in mind and body, to continue the work, so that Italy may once more be a splendid lighthouse of civilization. You must be ready, as were your fathers and grandfathers,



if the country calls to you, to fly to arms and die serenely should the safety and greatness of your country exact from you this supreme sacrifice."

As glazing eyes tried in vain to pierce the burning sky above the Libyan desert, or a tormented body writhed in a rocky fastness in East Africa, did they see in remote and misty perspective the days when their little sons first donned themselves in the pomp and circumstance of black shirts, olive-green breeches, and tasselled fezes of the *balilla*? There were times when the vigorous illustrations and the stirring prose of the *Libri di Stato* were revealed at their true worth as hollow mockeries.

Speaking, perhaps not inappropriately, in the Moses Chamber of the House of Commons when historians were trying to put their house in order, Prof. Claude H. Van Tyne, Head of the Department of History at the University of Michigan, told his listeners that experience convinced him that tradition is about the most ineradicable thing in the human mind. Citing the report of the body charged by Mayor Thompson to investigate the anti-American history books, the reckless denunciation of all the better school histories, and the declamations of so-called patriotic societies, he avowed that the politicians "awoke to the opportunity to save the country. They drew up laws against all texts that 'ignored, omitted, discounted, belittled, falsified, misrepresented, distorted, doubted or denied' the deeds—meaning, of course, the *traditional* deeds—of American patriots. Some of these bills were actually enacted".

Among the many intellectual rewards which Prof. Van Tyne saw in the study of history, the best of all, according to him, was that it cultivated "the habit of toleration for many different views which may be held on nearly all complex questions". The intricate problem of man's search for God, for instance. Here perhaps I may be forgiven an interpolation of a personal character. Many years ago, after perusing Mahan's books on Sea Power, I collected a stack—the word is used advisedly—of material on the influence of religion on history. It was a formidable undertaking, and before proceeding farther with it I thought it well to consult

Dr. J. Holland Rose, ever the kindly encourager of even the least worthy. Putting a hand on my shoulder, he said in his quiet and appealing way, "What a fine idea! But why didn't you start when you were younger? It is the work of a lifetime". So the notes and the card index, which have often beckoned to me as with a bent finger to disregard the warning, have remained unused other than for reference. I hope that some student, thirsting for a subject for a thesis, may pursue the same road of research. If he does, I wish him long life; he will need it.

I will point out one treacherous whirlpool that awaits his navigation of the shallows and deeps of the swiftly flowing waters of the stream. He will find himself creating additional barriers unless he emphasizes the extremely important fact that, for whatever reason, religion has often been propagated in a very irreligious way; assuming, that is to say, that religion has in it something pertaining to peace of mind. The *Concise Oxford Dictionary* defines the term as "human recognition of superhuman controlling power and especially of a personal God entitled to obedience, effect of such recognition on conduct and mental attitude". Devotees have frequently gone about their business as though they were the superhuman controlling power to whom God gave special recognition. Hence battle, murder and sudden death, the waging of wars carried out with appalling savagery, and what might well be called tit-for-tat campaigns and persecutions. The student will discover, as Prof. James Mackinnon warned undergraduates, that historic Christianity has proved at times a barrier as well as an inspiration to the progress of civilization. It has too often been the ally and even the nurse of fanaticism, superstition and presumptuous dogmatism, which, through the agency of erring man, has degraded the religion of Christ and added many crimes, sufferings and follies to the history of man. This remark was received with applause.

That highly provocative theologian, Dr. W. R. Inge, assures us, in his *Christian Ethics and Modern Problems*, that "It is only a long view of history that is likely to be comforting", and he gives it as his considered opinion

"that historical causes, which are no longer operative, have led to developments of Christianity which are quite alien to the intentions of the Founder, and that a complete breach with militant ecclesiasticism is necessary if Christianity is to take its proper place as a factor in the civilization of the future". It seemed to that hardy old champion of Liberalism, Goldwin Smith, that history was a vast struggle towards the attainment of moral perfection, of which, if the advent of Christianity furnished the true ideal, it may be deemed in a certain sense a revelation.

The campaigns of Israel, the Crusades, the Islamic incursions, the Thirty Years' War, the Civil War of our own country and of the United States, to mention no more than half a dozen conflicts waged wholly or in part with ethics as a dominating factor, are cases in point. John Brown, whose soul goes marching on, was firmly convinced that God had selected him to lead the slaves of the South to freedom, even by means of murder. This side of the issue, which was broadly based on the questions of slavery and the right to secede from the Union, plus commercial jealousy, is apt to be forgotten, but it was there nevertheless. Indeed, one might go so far as to say that most wars other than those of an essentially predatory character, such as the incursions of the Huns and Genghis Khan, have been alleged as fought for a moral purpose, using the word "moral" in the broadest of broad senses.

One can sympathize with the point of view of the courtier who remarked to Bishop Burnet, of *History of His Own Time* fame, that he believed as much as he could and God Almighty would, he felt sure, pardon him if he had not the digestion of an ostrich. It is certainly easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for an investigator to disintegrate the small specks of gold from the worthless alluvial soil of religious controversy when placed in the sieve of history. So much that appears to be precious metal turns out to be no more than tarnished trash. The fine spirit of toleration engendered by the Calverts in the colonization of Maryland was shattered by the Puritans, while the meddling ways and intolerance of John and Charles Wesley in Georgia

were so bitterly resented that the colonists heaved a sigh of relief when they embarked for England after a sojourn that was at once brief and too long. Even in these matters we are more than a little uncertain where the truth lies. The Calverts may have been men imbued with the spirit of altruism, they may have acted from self-interest, or from a judicious combination of both. Regarding Georgia, Benjamin Franklin says that the settlement, "instead of being made with hardy husbandmen, the only people fit for such an enterprise, it was with familiars of broken shopkeepers and other insolvent debtors; many of indolent and idle habits taken out of the jails". As for the Wesleys, they continued their bothersome ways on their return to their native land, to the great good of the "common" people and of the State Church, which spurned their labours but eventually profited by them. To Lord Egmont, Charles Wesley appeared to be "a very odd mixture of a man, an enthusiast and at the same time a hypocrite, wholly distasteful to the greater part of the inhabitants and an incendiary of the people against the magistracy".

Pointing out that the development of the European culture was largely conditioned by religious traditions, Mr. Christopher Dawson thinks that we are only just beginning to understand how intimately and profoundly the vitality of a society is bound up with its religion. He suggests that it is "the religious impulse which supplies the cohesive force which unifies a society and a culture. The great civilizations of the world do not produce the great religions as a kind of cultural by-product; in a very real sense, the great religions are the foundations on which the great civilizations rest. A society which has lost its religion becomes sooner or later a society which has lost its culture". Mr. Dawson adds that in Mesopotamia the beginnings of agriculture, irrigation and city life were religious in their conception. The achievements of ancient Egypt were centred around the Sun god and his child the god-king. With the rise of Humanism in western Europe man turned to applied science. A compromise was effected. Man "separated the sphere of religion from the sphere of reason".

Then came the eighteenth century, when "European civilization was thoroughly secularised", and its successor, "which aimed above all at industrial prosperity and commercial expansion". In material matters there was tremendous achievement but no corresponding progress in spiritual things. To the divorce between religion and social life Mr. Dawson attributes the distresses of the present age. These suggestions, all too briefly outlined, are worthy of intensive study.

It is well to make oneself familiar with the life-story and cultural background of an author, particularly if he happens to be an historian, before reading his books. The time and circumstances in which he lived will often explain much. Gibbon's chapters on Christianity in his *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* have offended many who either did not know or were forgetful that he lived in an age of free thinking, though Cardinal Newman asserted that "the chief, perhaps the only English writer who has any claim to be considered an ecclesiastical historian is the unbeliever Gibbon". His point of view was that of his age. He glimpsed the centuries through agnostic or atheistic glasses, seeing only what he wanted to see. No doubt on occasion he allowed theory to overwhelm fact, as he was apt to dominate conversation. Francis, fifth Duke of Leeds, records an evening when during dinner and for some time afterwards Gibbon held forth. Pausing to take a pinch of snuff and receive applause, a young man quietly questioned the correctness of something the orator had said. A very animated debate ensued, and the historian, "finding himself driven into a corner from which there was no escape", walked out of the room. Requested to return, he answered, "By no means; that young gentleman is, I have no doubt, extremely ingenious and agreeable, but I must acknowledge that his style of conversation is not exactly what I am accustomed to, so you must positively excuse me". The disturber of the peace was William Pitt the younger, then twenty-one years of age. Carlyle had a similar knack of taking charge of what was supposed to be a conversation, as W. H. Mallock discovered when he called on him in Chelsea. On this occasion the



author of *The New Republic* got his blow in first, and was rewarded by being told that the visit had not been enjoyed, and that he would not be welcomed if he called again.

Twenty-three years passed from the time Edward Gibbon thought of writing his *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* as he sat musing in the ruined Capitol at Rome until he finished it in a summer-house in Lausanne. Upwards of sixty separate editions, some of them frequently reprinted, had been issued by 1914, when Prof. J. B. Bury published the seventh and final volume of what is likely to remain for a considerable period the definitive edition. Gibbon is a historian who cannot be disregarded, even though some of his conclusions have been superseded in the light of later discoveries, but if Bury's footnotes are followed the reader is not likely to be led astray, for Gibbon "in the main things is still our master, above and beyond 'date'".

Religion, as aught else, has undergone evolution, particularly in regard to the idea of the nature of God, and it must not be overlooked that politics has influenced religion, as religion has influenced politics. Who can doubt its modelling the character of Gladstone? "I am, as you know," he wrote to a correspondent, "one altogether attached to dogma, which I believe to be the skeleton that carries the flesh, the blood, the life of the blessed thing we call the Christian religion. But I do not believe God's tender mercies are restricted to a small portion of the human family. . . . I was myself brought up to believe that salvation depended absolutely on the reception of a particular and very narrow creed. But long, long have I cast those weeds behind me." The exercise of tolerance may yet be the crowning glory of an age which, while not throwing over material gains won for it by science, will civilize civilization by developing a quality that most people appreciate in others even if they do not practise it themselves. "A false religion," Acton postulates, "fears the progress of all truth; a true religion seeks and recognizes truth wherever it can be found." To paraphrase G. F. Watts, religion has many doors and great light shining through many windows.

On this vexed and important phase of history much ink and many writing pads have been used, sometimes, it may be hoped, to good purpose. Bias can no more be eliminated than an author's mentality can be concealed if he writes in his normal way. Style is personality on paper. Optimism or pessimism, like murder, will out. If the historian's general outlook on life be drab he will paint his word-pictures in low colours; if his disposition be sanguine he will incline to the use of brilliant reds and blues. His white will be white and his black will be black; neither will be grey.

Carlyle may be likened to a sculptor. He hammered his words out of the living rock with a blunt chisel. The rugged nature of the man is revealed in his every sentence. "Let me write my books as my father built his houses," pleaded this forthright son of an honest stone-mason. There is much truth in what Mr. G. H. Mair says that the Sage's works "are fundamentally not about politics or history or literature, but about himself. They are the exposition of a splendid egotism, fiercely enthusiastic about one or two deeply-held convictions; their strength does not lie in their matter of fact". In a hurrying age, when the world expects to absorb rather than to read and to have its thinking done for it, Carlyle is not always easy to follow, thanks, in part, to his habit of word-building. "Gigmanity" and "dandiactal" are cases in point. He was the arch-hater of anything and everything that could be construed as hypocrisy or a sham. One can sympathize with Charlotte Brontë, who wished that he would write plain English. To Sir J. R. Seeley he was "earnest rather than serious". He had the earnestness of a Puritan, of which he was one, and the fire and fervour of a Hebrew prophet. "The good purposes of Providence shall not fail to be fulfilled in me," he wrote to his mother. In his love for all things German and his dislike for Jews he was a forerunner of Hitler. Meeting Joseph Joachim, the Hungarian violinist, he asked him if he were a Jew. On being answered in the affirmative, the gruff old man muttered, "Ugh! there never was a Jew worth anything!" Disraeli he characterized as "the unspeakable Jew"; "a cursed old Jew, not worth his weight in cold bacon,"

although he offered Carlyle the Grand Cross of the Order of the Bath, which he declined, while accepting the German Order Pour la Mérite.

As to Carlyle's discrimination, having placed a halo above the head of Frederick the Great, he turned over the idea of writing a life of Napoleon but abandoned it, deciding that his possible hero could only be classified as of "the brigand species". He called Herbert Spencer "the most unending ass in Christendom", while John Stuart Blackie referred to Carlyle as "a notable monster" to be respected for many noble thoughts and words of wisdom which he had flung abroad to bear divine fruit among foolish-hearted men. Whether Carlyle saw himself as others saw him is open to doubt, though his sense of humour may have prompted him to remark to Browning, who was apt to write in a somewhat involved fashion, "If you took up some one great subject and tasked all your powers upon it for a long while, vowing to Heaven that you *would* be plain to mean capacities, then . . .". This anecdote of the forerunner of Nietzsche and his supermen is related on the authority of his nephew, Mr. Alexander Carlyle. Shortly after the publication, in 1866, of Swinburne's *Poems and Ballads*, he remarked that their writer "sits in a cesspool and adds to it". Of the historian as prophet, this quotation from a letter of Carlyle dated October 20th, 1870, three months after the beginning of the Franco-Prussian War, must suffice: "I believe magnanimous, pious, strong, and modest Germany is henceforth to be Queen of the Continent, instead of vain, vaporising, impious and mischievous France; which I take to be the most blessed event in European politics I have witnessed in my time."

What was his philosophy of history? Just this, summed up in a couple of sentences of eighty-odd words by himself: "History is an inarticulate Bible, and in a dim, intricate manner reveals the divine appearances in this lower world. For God did make this world, and does for ever govern it; the loud roaring loom of Time, with all its French Revolutions, and Jewish Revelations, weaves the vesture thou seest Him by! There is no biography of a man, much less

of a nation, but wraps in it a message out of heaven, addressed to the hearing and the not hearing."

Carlyle believed in the doctrine of Force, that Might is Right. It was as much part and parcel of his creed as the sacredness of work. His sleeping partner in the production of *Friedrich* was a naturalized German, Joseph Neuberg, who laboured at the State Paper Office, "excerpting and abstracting", an "*alter ego* in all the deeper parts of that horrible immensity of drudgery, which I believe would have been impossible to *me* without him". Without suggesting that Carlyle would approve of the later doctrine of Germany, the Bishop of Lincoln wrote in 1915 that "his exaltation of one-man government and his contempt for the people served as a prelude to the harsher doctrines of modern Prussia", while Sir Edmund Gosse avowed that Carlyle "looked upon Germany as the only perfect and imitable State". Dr. G. M. Trevelyan points out that "it was not till later in his life that Carlyle went mad with Hero-worship, and ceased to understand his fellow-men with that all-embracing tolerance and sympathy which is the hall-mark of his *French Revolution*". His penetrating eyes caught a glimpse of the possibility that the machine, the slave of man, might make man its slave. Writing on "Signs of the Times" in the *Edinburgh Review* in 1829, he warned that humanity was growing mechanical in head and heart as well as in hand.

You do not go to this literary Jove flinging thunderbolts for facts but for pictures. If you are not careful you will be overwhelmed by the vastness of the composition. Much in his stuff suggests noisy music. He is the Wagner of historians, preferring the blare of trumpet and trombone to less shrill instruments, so anxious is he that the lightnings and shakings of Sinai shall be heard. Sometimes the result is sheer unmelodious row; there is a headache in every bar. Carlyle, to use yet another simile, is a medicine to be taken in small doses. Administered thus, it is a tonic; in larger doses a soporific. Strychnine can kill or cure. Meredith characterized Carlyle as "a heaver of rocks, not a shaper".

“The history of what man has accomplished in this world,” we are assured by Carlyle, “is at bottom the history of the great men who have worked here”. That was his pet belief, but Herbert Spencer was equally positive that “before the great man can remake his society, his society must make him”. Perhaps the truth of the matter lies in mid-stream, as was pointed out by a *Quarterly* reviewer. “Though the vast majority of mankind are, we fully admit, entirely unprogressive,” he writes, “yet, when great men do act upon them they develop under this stimulus a multitude of positive qualities; and the great man’s influence is largely conditioned by these. Indeed, the difference between the great man and the mass is one of degree rather than of kind, though it is not for this reason one whit less real or less important. The average soul has its depths and its mysteries as well as the loftier soul; and the hero only influences those who are not heroes, because they are in some sort feeblereplicas of himself. Few men can write great love-poems, but the commonest men can love; and the love-poems that have been rarest in their excellence have been those which have embodied the most frequent forms of the passion. So, too, with regard to great rulers and great reformers. They can only rule or reform because, in average human nature, these are qualities which respond and correspond to qualities in themselves.

“In addition to this,” the anonymous writer goes on, “the movements of men in masses are evidently subject to a variety of complicated laws, different from those affecting their movements singly; just as a storm in the Bay of Biscay is something more than a storm in a tea-cup magnified. One of the simplest of these laws, and yet one of the most important, we may call the law of moral momentum, which, though no doubt the individual is subject to it, is far more marked and more various in its operation on classes and communities. We mean by moral momentum that property in men and masses of men, in virtue of which they continue in movement after the actual force by which the movement was started has spent itself: a property analogous to that in virtue of which, and in virtue of which



alone, an arrow flies when it has left the bow-string, or the ball of a rifle after it has been expelled from the barrel. It will thus be seen that when the great man acts upon masses of men, though his action, or at least a large part of his action, originates in something peculiar to his own personality, yet the result of it, as exhibited in its effect on the masses, represents not his own characteristics only, but the characteristics—equally complicated and equally deserving of study—of average human nature also. The way in which the masses respond to the great man's stimulus is as much a problem for the philosopher of history as the nature of the stimulus itself."

Carlyle, in labour with the universe, was no admirer of Macaulay, who held that but a small proportion of the good or evil effected by a single statesman can bear to the good or evil of a great social system. He called him "the sublime of the commonplace, not one of whose ideas has the least tincture of greatness or originality or any kind of superior merit except neatness of expression". The author of the popular *Essays* and the *History of England from the Accession of James II* disliked the works of his equally-famous contemporary. Neither founded a school of thought, but whereas the former had no imitators, the clarity and easy diction of the latter had a deep influence on his successors, some of whom consciously or unconsciously copied his methods.

Reproached with having descended below what was termed "the dignity of history", Macaulay avowed that he would cheerfully bear the reproach if he could succeed in placing before the Englishmen of the nineteenth century a true picture of the life of their ancestors. Prof. C. H. Firth, who edited with fine scholarship an illustrated edition of Macaulay's classic, says that the author "sought to realize the character and ideas of the common people". History, as Acton stated, had gone into the kitchen. It need not necessarily remain there, but it is not at all a bad place from which to start surveying a house. The search for provender was obviously man's first job. Food is fundamental, and if an army marches on its belly, as Napoleon

proclaimed, neither family nor tribe, neither nation nor empire can proceed far without meals. From the Age of the cave man to that of the aviator the commissariat has been a centre of interest and importance.

In part Macaulay may have answered to Sydney Smith's description of him as a book in breeches. Some of his stuff may betray too hasty generalizations, certain superficialities and mistaken judgments, but both Mommsen and Harnack, no mean authorities, agreed that Macaulay was the greatest historian the world has produced. Creighton and Stubbs were of the same opinion. These unsolicited testimonials far outweigh the wholesale condemnation of Frederic Harrison that Macaulay was the great penny-a-liner who gave a paltry, narrow, unbelieving view of the drama of history. He did not view life through rose-coloured glasses but through the blue-tinted lenses, mounted in a yellow frame, of the Whigs, of which party he was a firm devotee. The result is a distortion that precluded him from seeing certain of his characters as a whole. On occasion Macaulay was as intolerant as he diagnosed Laud and Strafford to be. He gloried in paradox, which is a double-edged weapon, and when wielding it he occasionally wounded himself instead of the enemy.

Mr. Winston Churchill's exposure of Macaulay's libel on the first Duke of Marlborough will be fresh in the mind of many readers. Mr. Stephen Gwynne showed the great historian's inexactitudes regarding Swift, Stella and Sir William Temple. Matthew Arnold criticized what he called Macaulay's "cocksureness". Perhaps he relied a little too much on his amazing memory, coupled with the ambition, as he himself admitted, that his pages "may read as if they had been spoken off, and seem to flow as easily as table talk". Macaulay strove after perfection in this matter of presentation. Had he reached it he would have abrogated to himself the prerogative of the Almighty. As a popularizer of history the world is under deep and lasting obligation to him, although some years ago the Japanese censor professed to discover that Macaulay's *Essays* had a pernicious influence on the youthful mind, and banned them.

A cynic once remarked that on the lych-gate of every churchyard should be inscribed the words, "Here lie the dead, and here the living lie". In this category we would not place Macaulay's epitaph in Westminster Abbey: "His body is buried in peace, but his name liveth for evermore." Before his passing history had ceased to be austere, prim and proper. It had doffed its top hat and frock coat for clothing more suited to the rough and tumble of everyday life. The Dryasdust order of historians remains with us, appreciated by scholars and post-graduates who prefer stuffy rooms and semi-darkness to the air and light of open windows. Theirs is the task of discovering the minutiae of the subject, the odd bits and pieces that help to make the whole. They, too, are worthy labourers, continuing in their various ways the work of such a man as William, Monk of Malmesbury, trusting, like him, that they will "gain with posterity, when love and hatred shall be no more, if not the reputation of eloquence, at least the credit of industry".

Mr. Hilaire Belloc's bias is known and recognized. One of Will Dyson's most telling etchings pictures Mr. Belloc leading Clio by the ear. It is called "The Path to Rome", and in a telling and subtle way illustrates the handling of history by the author of a much-read volume bearing the same title. Mr. Belloc is completely forthright in all matters connected with religion. He represents the Roman Catholic Church, and leaves you under no delusion about it. His controversy with Mr. H. G. Wells following the publication of the latter's *Outline of History* was entertaining, if not particularly enlightening, and led the author to retort that he did not know how any writer could see history except from his own standpoint.

## CHAPTER V

### RECOVERING YESTERDAY WITH A SPADE

HISTORY has not only resorted to "below stairs" for information ; it has delved in the kitchen middens and found much treasure-trove in the refuse heaps. Clio turns up her nose at nothing. She is not too proud to dig and delve. While the spade is not mightier than the pen, it has contributed much to its power by unearthing an enormous amount of knowledge of the past. The remains of forgotten civilizations have been resurrected, the strength, weakness, and foibles of mankind over thousands of years have been brought to light, in some cases affording encouragement and in others knocking the conceit out of us.

The young woman sitting in a train using lip-stick is cultivating no new fashion. Cosmetics were used by the ancient Egyptians. The women adorned their faces with malachite. Much nearer our own time, not more than fifteen hundred years ago, a Roman lady left her make-up box at Heddernheim, near Frankfurt. It was discovered in 1931, a year in which American women, despite the depression, spent £125,000,000 on cosmetics. The contents of two of the ancient lip-sticks were analysed. Among the ingredients were zinc, calcium and copper, all of which are employed for the same purpose today. The word "cosmetic" is derived from the Greek *kosmetikos*, skilled in decorating. The Spartans said that they could smell the presence of the much-perfumed Persian male at a distance of 200 paces.

The same charming person in the railway carriage was possibly a shorthand-typist who thought that Isaac Pitman was the first inventor of a system of stenography. An abbreviated longhand was used by the Greeks in the fourth century B.C., and writing by means of symbols was practised by them in the third century A.D.

The makings of a library of historical novels and of many amendments to more matter-of-fact tomes are to be had in

the findings of the digger, and also, be it added, of the destroyer and the restorer. Workmen renovating Blackness Castle, on the shore of the Firth of Forth, came across a human skeleton with iron shackles attached to it. Part at least of one of the grim secrets of the old State prison was revealed. While navvies were repairing a road leading to Chantilly, near the Château de Montane, their picks went through the roof of a cave. Within they found the bones of thirty men, women and children, probably victims of the religious wars of Henry IV of France, when to capture disbelievers in a particular form of religion and to bury them alive for the good of their souls was not regarded as inhuman but carrying on the Lord's work.

Unknown centuries before these tragedies were consummated a near-man died in the neighbourhood of Piltdown, Sussex. Workmen discovered parts of his fossilized skull, and a patient investigator, Mr. Charles Dawson, came across half of a lower jaw-bone and a canine tooth. Piltdown Man's ancestry is a little hazy, as is his relationship to *Homo sapiens*—ourselves. Let it suffice that the pedigree hunters have sought to trace and define the many branches of a remote family tree that may go back a million years. Among nature's experiments that failed were the Ape-man of Java, Heidelberg man, Peking man, Piltdown man, Rhodesian man and Neanderthal man. We may be added to the list unless we prove worthy of *sapiens*, which is just the Latin word for wise, sensible, prudent, judicious.

Many lands and many investigators have contributed to the vast accumulation of material of every phase of life. Indeed, the stuff is overwhelming if, as is common nowadays, the historian begins his narrative with the story of the making of the stage on which humanity has played, and continues to play, its serio-tragic comedy, for life has its humorous as well as its serious side. It might be well if historians recorded something of laughter as well as of tears. They are sometimes grim-visaged individuals, deadly earnest of purpose, and, like other well-meaning folk intent on setting the world to rights, only succeed in adding to its discomfort.



Tremendous incentive to the study of the past was given by the discovery in 1798, during Napoleon's expedition to Egypt, of a black basalt slab. It was found near the Rosetta mouth of the Nile by an artillery officer named Boussard. Scholars had puzzled and failed to decipher the meaning of the strange picturegraphs that mocked them on papyrus, mummy cases and monuments. The stone supplied the key, for the inscription was in three sections, hieroglyphics, ordinary Egyptian characters called demotic, and Greek. With this help François Champollion and others gradually unveiled the secret that had hitherto defied the most inquisitive of learned men. The stele had apparently been engraved in 196 B.C.

From 1870, when Heinrich Schliemann began to dig at Hissarlik, in Asia Minor, for the site of ancient Troy, until 1942, when Sir Flinders Petrie died in harness in Jerusalem at the age of 89, a host of investigators was attracted to the task of turning over the dust of ages for unconsidered trifles. Sir Gaston C. C. Maspero recovered the stolen mummies of forgotten royalty at Deirel-Bahri in 1881, and cleared some of the temples of the accumulated debris of centuries. Sir Arthur Evans excavated the Minoan palace at Knossos in 1900-1908, throwing further light on what Schliemann had discovered at Mycenae. Sir Leonard Woolley patiently dug at Ur, but no concrete memorial of Abraham was found. Nevertheless the explorations showed that Sumerian culture played an important part in moulding the character of the father of his people. Abraham the nomad always remained, in part at least, Abraham the townsman. Through him the laws of Ur were handed down, and became the foundations of the Mosaic code. Discarding the grosser elements of the crude paganism of his time, he evolved from the family god of his people the conception of a God who was moral in himself and universal in his authority. In his *Abraham: Recent Discoveries and Hebrew Origins*, Sir Leonard Woolley paints a memorable word picture of the teeming city, with its insanitary streets but fairly spacious houses, its middle-class townsmen, merchants and officials as it was nearly 4,000 years ago; more important still, the book

helps the reader to what is doubtless a truer appraisal of Abraham's place in history, even though it seems probable that three separate individuals have been combined into one composite figure. The first statue of a female of early date found in Mesopotamia was of the goddess Bau, patroness of the poultry yard.

The fascination of the *Arabian Nights* had already sent Sir Henry Austen Layard to the East, and led to his great discoveries on the site of Nineveh; Sir Henry Rawlinson translated the Assyrian inscriptions, the language used being until then a profound mystery. Perched on a towering rock at Behistun was a mighty sculpture showing Darius, king of Persia from 521 B.C. to 485, receiving the chiefs of nations who had revolted against his rule. There was also an elaborate series of inscriptions in the cuneiform characters of Babylonia, Persia and Susa, but nobody had been able to decipher them other than the names Darius, Hystaspes and Xerxes. In 1837 Rawlinson, a soldier by profession and an enthusiastic archaeologist, managed to copy two of the inscriptions. It was not only a difficult but a dangerous undertaking, and on one occasion he was within an ace of death when the ladder on which he was working gave way. A Kurdish youth eventually succeeded in taking paper impressions of the panels. Ten years after his preliminary investigations Rawlinson published a translation. With unwearied patience he had puzzled out the hitherto undecipherable signs. They recorded the king's campaigns: an elaborate piece of propaganda, a form of advertisement which some people think was invented by Lord Northcliffe to help the Allies win the First World War. On the wall of the staircase of his great palace at Persepolis, so that his courtiers could not fail to see it whenever they passed up or down, was the sentence, "Darius the king saith: This land of Persia, which Ahuramazda (the national god) has entrusted to me, the land that is beautiful, that hath good people and fine horses by the will of Ahuramazda and my will, it fears no enemy".

We know something of the value of Waste campaigns, of the worth of unconsidered trifles such as scrap metal and

paper in waging total war. Litter is the wealth of history. The historian cannot restore lost time, but he can recover much of what was achieved in the long ago. The wonderful story of Knossos, in Crete—an island which has taken on new meaning for this generation—was virtually lost other than in legend for 3,000 years until Sir Arthur Evans began in 1900 to study the scraps and fragments that remained. He amplified the discoveries made by Schliemann at Troy and on the Greek mainland. Beautifully carved figures of women wearing such exquisite gowns that a French savant exclaimed in amazement, "But these are Parisians!" were unearthed. The courts and temples, the storehouses and offices of the palace of King Minos were brought to light; the story of the Labyrinth and the Minotaur was proved as fact.

Delving in the neighbourhood of Kish, the oldest capital of Sumeria, some eight miles from Babylon, Prof. Stephen Langdon unearthed evidence of a flood that occurred not later than 3200 B.C., and was doubtless the deluge described in Genesis and noted in the Chaldean records. Proof that the horse was already the servant, or slave, of man in Babylonia nearly 5,000 years ago was furnished by the finding of clay models of "the ass of the mountains" in the ruins of the palace, which was built about 3000 B.C. The romantic discovery of the tomb of Tutankhamen by Lord Carnarvon and Mr. Howard Carter amazed the world. Armageddon, the site of the battle of Megiddo mentioned in the Old Testament and the place where, according to the writer of Revelation, the battle on the Day of Judgment will be fought, was sold for archaeological exploration in 1930 to the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago. It changed hands for £700.

In June, 1941, undeterred by the rumblings of the storm that was about to break over their country, a number of Russian scientists opened the tomb of Tamerlane, also known as Timur, the bloodthirsty ravisher of western Asia and conqueror of India. They found the skeleton of the man who had raised a pyramid of 70,000 skulls at Ispahan, and whose name was for long a symbol of cruelty, enclosed

in an ebony coffin. With care they measured the length of the legs. They wanted to confirm or deny a tradition that had been handed down for five centuries. The left leg was longer than the right leg. The belief that the scourge was a cripple was attested.

Three years before the Russians satisfied their curiosity the remains of the Conqueror of the World, to give a literal translation of the name Chingiz (or Genghis) Khan, were removed from their tomb near Suiyuan to prevent them from falling into enemy hands. While the prolonged war, or "incident", between China and Japan was raging, the silver casket of the man who had dethroned twenty-seven kings was removed to a secret place in China. Restless in life and accustomed to long journeys, the dust was carried for six days through a country of utter desolation, which was appropriate enough. With it went what was left of his two wives. The Chinese native Press made much of the passage; it was considered good propaganda. In 1227, when the remains had made their previous procession, every person that watched was put to death so that none might betray the fact that the warrior had surrendered to the universal conqueror.

In the long cavalcade of kings and queens of our own realm, probably the two least attractive are John and Richard III. I remember hating both as a boy, cordially agreeing with John Richard Green's stern disapproval of the former. "Foul as hell is," he wrote, "it would be made fouler by the presence of John". As for the real or alleged hunchback, I was equally certain that he had been condemned to the flames of eternal damnation. When, in later years, being sea-minded, I discovered that the third Plantagenet had done something to strengthen the fleet, and that during his reign England achieved her first really important naval victory, I hoped that his sufferings might be lessened just a little, but not too much. Even then I was somewhat hesitant because the real hero of the piece was John's half-brother, William Longsword, Earl of Salisbury, who had taken the offensive and smashed up the French squadron at Damme intended for the invasion of England. Our

attitude toward people who have played an active part in affairs is apt to undergo revision with the passing of years and the accumulation of reading. This is not an unimportant side of history. It suggests the exercise of less hasty judgment, emphasizes that however learned a man may be he cannot "know it all", and helps in the gaining of a truer perspective. Black though Richard's character undoubtedly is, it is manifestly unfair to apply the highest standard of to-day's code of morals to the latter half of the fifteenth century, the period in which he lived. His contemporaries, the Sforzas, the Borgias and the Medici were by no means angels of light. Sir Sidney Low, while characterizing the monarch as unscrupulous, cruel and violent, adds that he was "probably no worse than contemporary princes and statesmen; no worse, certainly, than his brother or his successor". The opinion of Prof. A. F. Pollard is that Richard was not quite so black as he was painted, and that his crimes may have been committed in the interests of his only legitimate son as much as in his own.

Of late years it has been the fashion to whitewash the characters of the less worthy and besmirch others previously regarded as entirely respectable. Sir Clement R. Markham set out to prove that Richard III was not the murderer of his nephews, Edward V and Richard Duke of York. He fastened the crime on Henry VII, for whom Dr. James Gairdner, an acknowledged authority on Yorkist and Lancastrian times, furnished an alibi. To settle the point, in 1933 Prof. William Wright, an eminent anatomist, with Dr. Foxley Norris, Dean of Westminster, Lord Moynihan, and others as witnesses opened the urn containing the alleged bones of the two "Princes in the Tower". The Professor spent a week examining and photographing the remains, which were subsequently reinterred. Mr. Lawrence Tanner, Keeper of the Muniments, also carried out an independent inquiry. The findings of the two experts corresponded almost exactly. So far as it was possible to do so the traditional murder of the two boys by order of Richard III was corroborated, though not positively confirmed.



## CHAPTER VI

### HISTORY IN FACT AND FICTION

"Is it not as interesting, as useful," asked Prof. David Masson, "to recover some image of the demeanour of an important human being who lived long ago as to reconstruct the material form of an extinct animal from its fossil?" Shakespeare achieved this in an inimitable way, but he did not write as an historian. That was not his job, and I hope it may not be regarded as an impertinence if I suggest to teachers of young children that they warn their pupils against accepting the statements of the Bard of Avon as though he were an exact chronicler of events. I have met boys who were under the impression that what they termed the "conversational bits" of Shakespeare were honest-to-God speeches taken down almost at first hand, very much as a modern reporter might record the speech of a prominent personality of today. Shakespeare was a dramatist and a poet, mentally visualizing his characters, making them say and do things as he thought the personages he diagnosed would say and do in real life. He worked upon many kinds of material, borrowing from many and various sources, as did Molière, but interpreting all with the rare insight of genius. Germany made much of Shakespeare long before the birth of Hitler. Herder, Lessing, Goethe, Schiller and a host of less luminous lights proclaimed him, but it remained for Prof. Werner Deetjen to declare that he was a "great Germanic poet", and that his women are "prototypes for every nation of Nordic-Germanic stamp". The predatory policy of the Nazis was evident even in the kidnapping of Great Men.

Apropos of Richard III, Dr. August Goll, a Dane, published a volume some years ago dealing with Shakespeare's criminal types, discerning in the unfortunate king the "criminal by instinct". It is to be feared that Shakespeare wrote "only in part", as did John Drinkwater, who in introducing the book of his play *Abraham Lincoln*, pleaded that

"While I have, I hope, done nothing to traverse history, I have freely telescoped its events, and imposed invention upon its movement, in such ways as I needed to shape the dramatic significance of my subject". Drinkwater held that history is a chronicle of life in its most absorbing aspects.

In *The Dynasts* Thomas Hardy took immense pains to ensure the historical accuracy of the epic-drama of Britain's fight for freedom against Napoleon that is accounted one of the finest gems in the casket of English literature. Questioned as to whether the Emperor actually made his entry into Berlin by the Potsdamer Strasse, he replied that although he did not recollect the source of his information, he did not think he would have written it without authority. The pleadings of the Spirit of the Pities and the mockings of the Spirit Ironic reveal the depth of Hardy's philosophy, at once replete with a noble and sensitive compassion for man's lot and a profound sense of the irony of it. The Universe is indifferent. He believed that "If way to the Better there be, it exacts a full look at the Worst". He spoke no smooth things, laying bare the greatness and the littleness of man.

Too vast with its three parts, nineteen acts, 130 scenes and hundreds of characters for adequate presentation on the stage, for which it was never intended, a version was performed at the Kingsway Theatre, London, in 1914, when Britain was in the throes of another great conflict, and also by the Oxford University Dramatic Society in 1920. Those who would condemn Hardy as an out-and-out pessimist will do well to recollect the line, "The gift of gifts is sturdy manhood", in the new epilogue which the author wrote for Mr. Granville Barker's production, and also the closing stanza of the mighty epic-drama itself which suggests a future possibility and is highly reminiscent of the words of St. John the Divine, "Behold, I make all things new".

Seek where he would, Hardy could find no trace either in the past or present of a Divine Power interested in human affairs; the inscrutable Imminent Will worked with a blind indifference to humanity. Probably the majority of men

and women will agree with the critic that "life has a better batting average than he gives it". Here once more the question of temperament arises, about which something has been said on an earlier page. As a small boy making his way home from school reading *Pilgrim's Progress* Hardy had been compelled to shut the book for fear Apollyon sprang upon him. His mind would seem to have been cast in a Schopenhauer mould; it was intuitively tragic. Apollyon was never far off, nor the ravens in flocks that followed Napoleon's soldiers on the retreat from Moscow, "waiting to pick out the eyes of strays who fall". Mankind are all strays. J. B. Bury, a professional historian, made this confession: "I know for myself that on days when I am a determinist I look on history in one way, and on days when I am an indeterminist in quite another."

We are told by one who knew him intimately that the First World War destroyed Hardy's belief in the gradual ennoblement of man. The battering of Rheims cathedral bestirred the architect within him; the history enshrined in stained-glass, in sculpture and in mouldings bade him ask, "How can that history be imparted to a renewal?" He hoped that the bombardment might have been carried out by some mischance or contrary to orders. On the question of accidental or intentional bombardment depended the question whether German civilization should become a byword for ever. "Should it turn out to be a predetermined destruction—as an object lesson of the German ruling caste's Will to Power—it will strongly suggest," he wrote, "what a disastrous blight upon the glory and nobility of that great nation has been wrought by the writings of Nietzsche, with his followers Treitschke, Bernhardt, etc. I should think there is no instance since history began of a country being so demoralised by a single writer, the irony being that he was a megalomaniac, and not truly a philosopher at all.

"What puzzles one," he continued, "is to understand how the profounder thinkers in Germany, and to some extent elsewhere, can have been so dazzled by this writer's bombastic poetry—for it is a sort of prose-poetry—as to be

blind to the fallacy of his arguments—if they can be called arguments which are off-hand assumptions. His postulates as to what life is on this earth have no resemblance to reality. Yet he and his school seem to have eclipsed for the time in Germany the close-reasoned philosophies of such men as Kant and Schopenhauer. It is rather rough on the latter that their views of life should be swept into one net with those of Nietzsche, Treitschke, and the rest, as ‘German philosophy’ (as has been done by some English writers to the papers) when they really differ further in ethics than the humane philosophers mentioned differ in that respect from Christianity.” Something will be said on this point in a later chapter.

The Great Historical Calamity, or Clash of Peoples, artificially brought about some hundred years ago, as Hardy characterized the subject of *The Dynasts*, was followed by the Greater Historical Calamity, which he knew, and the Greatest Historical Calamity which came after his ashes had been interred in the Poets’ Corner of Westminster Abbey and his heart in the Wessex churchyard of Stinsford. One wonders how he would have regarded the quasi-philosophy of *Mein Kampf*, the casting out of the honest thinkers, and the prohibition of all works not impressed with the Nazi stamp. The invective against Nietzsche and others of the same breed would scarcely have sufficed. He would doubtless have exacted a full look at the Worst, seeing in it yet another “thwarted purposing”.

The historical novel as such, full of incidents more or less based on actual happenings, has suffered an eclipse, though by no means a total eclipse, of recent years. Perhaps there is rather too much looking up references attached to this type of literary work to attract writers of fiction. Yet in some of the romances that have been penned the life of a period is visualized in a more apt way than is allowable in a textbook, if only because of the exacting requirements of space. Moreover, from the point of view of younger readers, no suggestion of education shadows the pages of the historical novel, which is usually not crowded with a succession of characters often only remotely associated.

The stories comprised in Galsworthy's *Forsyte Saga* picture phases of social life which the historian has little likelihood of equalling, let alone of bettering. Charles Reade, who resurrected medieval life in *The Cloister and the Hearth*, made it part of his programme "never to guess where I can know", and took immense pains in the collection of data. Sir J. C. Squire recalls that when he was at Oxford studying the Age of Louis XI Dr. Tanner told him that he could learn even more about the period from *The Cloister and the Hearth* than from Scott's *Quentin Durward*.

Right at the beginning of his much-read book Reade got to the very heart of the matter, pointing out the difference between history as it is too often recorded and history as it might be told: "There is a musty Chronicle written in tolerable Latin, and in it a chapter where every sentence holds a fact. Here is told with harsh brevity the strange history of a pair who lived untrumpeted and died unsung four hundred years ago, and lie now as unpitied on that stern page as fossils in a rock. Thus, living or dead, Fate is still unjust to them. For if I can but show you what lies below that dry Chronicler's words, methinks you will correct the indifference of centuries, and give those two sore-tried souls a place in your heart for a day." History, which should vitalize and inspire, needs to free itself of the "harsh brevity" and the "stern page". Clio should smile more often, be less forbidding, be a little more gracious in her way of speech.

The opinion of an historical novelist on fellow workers in his own trade may be regarded as suspect, but possibly those acquainted with the works of the authors named by Mr. Alfred Tresidder Sheppard will be more or less in agreement with him in his choice. "The boys or girls," he remarks, "steeped in Scott, in Reade, in Hugo, in Dumas, in Lytton, in Hewlett, in Weyman, even in Harrison Ainsworth, who knew far more real history than is generally supposed, have, in my pennyworth of observation, an admirable groundling in history which will often incite them to further study, and induce them to discover where the novelist and the historian differ, and which of the two is more likely to be right. History and its byways could easily be made far



more fascinating, and not the dry-as-dust business they have so often been". This may be a counsel of perfection so far as the ordinary student is concerned, but a teacher might find the point regarding comparison worth noting. Sir Conan Doyle, in some of the short stories told in *The Last Galley*, made the experiment of relating fact as fiction without relying on love interest. Although Thackeray called himself a "small-beer chronicler", what refreshing draughts he gave to the world in *Esmond*, in which the days of Queen Anne are reborn! There is much that is inaccurate in Dumas, and much that is true, but no historian ever conveyed the sense of atmosphere with greater success. "Write the history of the world," his son advised after the elder Alexandre had completed *The Prussian Terror*. "I have thought of that," came the answer; "the objection is that you must either adhere to Biblical tradition, which only goes back six or seven thousand years, and that would be too short; or else you must follow science, and that would be too long."

Charles Kingsley was both historian and novelist. His recipe for the study with which we are concerned was to read autobiographies and biographies. "Fill your mind with live human figures," he advised, "people of like passions with yourselves; see how they lived and worked in the time and place in which God put them. Believe me, that when you have thus made a friend of the dead, and brought them to life again, and let them teach you to see with their eyes and feel with their hearts, you will begin to understand more of their generation and their circumstances than all the mere history books of the period will teach you."

It has been said that Sir Walter Scott, on the whole, was probably a fairer historian than Froude. Both were partisans, though Scott was certainly not of the "bitter and unscrupulous" variety of Tory that Macaulay would have him to be, but while Froude had little or nothing good to say for the Roman Catholic Church, Scott was superbly tolerant. What reader of *Old Mortality* can fail to be impressed by the wisdom of Morton in answering Burley regarding the reformation of Kirk and State and the destruction of "the man

of sin" for which the Covenanters stood? "I revere the Scriptures," said the young prisoner, "as deeply as you or any Christian can do. I look into them with humble hope of extracting a rule of conduct and a law of salvation. But I expect to find this by an examination of their general tenour, and of the spirit which they uniformly breathe, and not by wresting particular passages from their context, or by the application of scriptural phrases to circumstances and events with which they have often very slender relation."

The First World War produced a spate of books based on odd texts torn from the Bible that seemed to their compilers to fit in with happenings that had either taken place or were about to occur, as the glib tongues of Mause Middlemas, Kettledrummle, Poundtext and the rest of them quoted references from the same source that added fuel to their already flaming convictions. The doom of the Kaiser was foretold, as no doubt the end of Hitler was foreshadowed, in some text or other. Dr. G. M. Trevelyan points out that while there is "brave guess-work" in *Ivanhoe*, and that *Quentin Durward*, *Kenilworth* and *Woodstock*, considered as historical works, cannot teach a modern student what he would fail to find elsewhere, he regards *Waverley* as still the best history book on the 'Forty-five "considered as a social phenomenon in its peculiar time and place, better even than the admirable narrative in the *Tales of a Grandfather*". The anonymous novel was published in July, 1814, and was based on material Scott had gathered with his own ears and eyes.

If Scott's romances move at too slow a tempo, and are a little old-fashioned in diction for the present feverish times, are not these reasons why they should be read? They may help us to keep our balance and recover lost composure, though some of his pompous periods may irritate on occasion. Maybe we should be none the worse, and perhaps all the better, if we recovered a little of the colour of the past to offset the drab of the present. It may not be out of place to mention that Scott intended to wind up the *Waverley* novels with *The Siege of Malta*, which he left unfinished.

Part of it was written on the gallant little island which later gained for itself the unhappy record of being the most-bombed territory in the world. Scott deserved "a seat on the bench of the historians of his time and country", not on the score of consistent accuracy but as one who adjudged that while the letter killeth, the spirit giveth life.

"It is easy to say," writes a modern critic, "that his historical characters do not show us the men as they were. Gentle King Jamie was probably more of a sot and less of a humorist than the King James who figures in *The Fortunes of Nigel*. Richard the lion-hearted is credited with many stern actions that we can scarcely associate with the knight-errant who sings and eats with the jolly friar, and is all things to all men in his pilgrimage. Robert III of Scotland and Charles II of England may not be represented with photographic accuracy, one in *The Fair Maid of Perth* the other in *Pevenil of the Peak*; but they are indubitably men, and the imagination of Sir Walter was just as likely to penetrate the truth about them as the industry of Dr. Dry-as-dust painfully amassing facts in his library." In dealing with the intellectual influence of Britain on France, M. Yves Guyot noted that Scott rendered history familiar by making his heroes eat, drink and sleep.

Commenting on this matter, Dr. G. P. Gooch considers that no one surpassed Scott in his power of bringing the dead to life. "To read of the revels of *Kenilworth*," he says, "is to visualise Queen Elizabeth in all her masculine strength and her feminine weakness. In *The Abbot* we hold our breath as Mary Queen of Scots escapes from Lochleven. What reader of *The Fortunes of Nigel* can ever banish the picture, incomplete though it be, of James I, the wisest fool in Europe? *The Talisman* stamps King Richard and Saladin on our minds, and Louis XI peers grimly forth from the pages of *Quentin Durward*. The Young Pretender lives for ever in *Waverley*, and no picture of Queen Caroline brings her so close to us as her interview with Jeanie Deans."

The question of the genuineness of the ballads in Scott's *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* was once hotly debated. How far were they more or less faithful transcripts, and how

much was due to Scott's editing or interpolation? He made many raids for material in the congenial company of his fellow volunteer in the Edinburgh Light Horse, James Skene, of Rubislaw. The latter states that there were few subjects of Border history or romance, and scarcely a portion of the scenery of the Border counties, however secluded and remote, that they did not explore. While his companion was sketching, Scott would "con over some appropriate ballad", and "sometimes, but rarely," Skene adds, would "note in his book some passing ideas, for in general his memory was the great store-house on which he relied". That is probably as far as we are likely to get. He was a generous editor intent on giving form to much that was void. The edition revised and edited by Mr. T. F. Henderson provides ample material for those who would delve farther into the matter. Of Scott's days wandering about in Liddesdale, his friend Shortreed tells us that "He was making himsell a' the time".

It is because Dickens reflects so admirably the spirit of the age that his work is so useful educationally. This does not mean that his work is a species of pseudo-history. Far from it. But it does mean that the reader will get an excellent idea of the Victorian period, and the knowledge will add to his store appreciably, and in no wise detract from the interest of the narrative. Dickens wrote when England was suffering the birth pangs of Democracy, when aristocracy was putting up its last great fight, and the machine was marching on its progressive way, to become in the twentieth century both a miracle and a menace. Earl Baldwin has finely termed Dickens the Chronicler of the People of England: "He was the first man who had a conception of the so-called 'lower orders', and could treat them as men and women with character, not as characters."

Harrison Ainsworth, Bulwer-Lytton, Victor Hugo, Thackeray—a galaxy of suns in the literary firmament—were of the same distinguished company. Charlotte Brontë complained that in *Esmond* Thackeray had put "too much history, too little story". In it one meets Addison and Steele, the fourth Duke of Hamilton and Lord Mohun, while

Beatrix Esmond in real life was Elizabeth Chudleigh, Countess of Bristol and Duchess of Kingston. The pages are a literary time-machine that reveals the eighteenth century with great faithfulness.

Thackeray visited the United States, and gave the world *The Virginians*, with its description of plantation life and fights with redskins, based on data obtained from the Fairfax family's settlement at Northampton, Maryland. "If I can say anything," wrote Thackeray, "to show that my name is really Makepeace, and to increase the source of love between the two countries then, please God, I will." Since that time the United States and Britain have twice fought side by side. "Where, in the pages of any American patriot or in any Fourth of July oration," asks an anonymous critic, "can we find the glory of Washington measured out as it is in a few vivid sentences of *The Virginians*? A man must have read *Esmond* and *The Virginians* to very little purpose who does not see that Thackeray's real conception of history was something very much higher than a chronicle of gossip and upholstery."

As an historian John Buchan (Lord Tweedsmuir) will be remembered for his masterly studies of Montrose, Julius Caesar, Augustus and the First World War. He spent over fifteen years cogitating and writing the book on the Great Marquis. It was fitting that he went to the western Dominion as Governor-General, for to him at that time the most impressive fact in the world was the 3,000-odd miles of undefended frontier between Canada and the United States, which he characterized as "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen, a summons to a new and better way of life".

The Cree Indians gave him the title Okemow Utataowkew, the Story Teller. It is doubtless as a romancer that Buchan will live in the big heart of the public, but it is likely that some of the readers of his less serious works turn to his more important contributions to knowledge. The pagan rites in *Witch Wood*, the English Reformation in *The Blanket of the Dark*, and many another of his novels show the trend of the author's mind. The flowing periods reveal nothing



of the preliminary research that went into the making of these fascinating romances. There is no smell of the lamp.

There are critics who hold that in James Anthony Froude the world lost a good novelist and gained an inferior historian, that he showed himself in his true colours when he penned *The Two Chiefs of Dunboyne*. Not that Froude deliberately faked with malice aforethought, but his dice was loaded. He was a prosecuting or defending counsel, not a judge, and he did the best for the side he represented. "I cannot," wrote Sir J. R. Seeley, "make history more interesting than it is except by falsifying it; and therefore when I meet a person who does not find history interesting, it does not occur to me to alter history, I try to alter him." Froude distorted by leaving out or putting in. He sacrificed veracity for effect. Indeed, he confessed that he did not pretend to impartiality.

The first Lord Coleridge, Lord Chief Justice, assuredly knew something about the law of evidence. When asked by a friend to read Froude's *Oceana*, he replied that he had known the author too long and rated him too low to waste time on what he called "the works of a worthless writer. I know that the truth is not in him. I do really believe him to be physically incapable of speaking it; he garbles and changes names in letters which he professes to get out; mistranslates the plainest language; betrays the most sacred trust; is indignantly contradicted about the clearest and simplest statements in every Colony he writes about. What is the use of reading a writer whom you cannot quote for a single fact? He has a style, you will say. Perhaps: there is no accounting for tastes, but I cannot even like his style, which seems to me, like himself, false and affected!" He was "constitutionally inaccurate", says Dr. W. Hunt.

Froude, despite Lord Coleridge, was a brilliant stylist. The reader who picks up his *English Seamen in the Sixteenth Century* is soon spell-bound. He becomes a patriotic adventurer. There is drama and action, tanging spray and a healthy breeze. His artistic susceptibilities were upset by the ponderous medieval Latin used by Erasmus. So

in his translations he "improved" on it, with results that on occasion gave a squint to the words of the great humanist. In the preparation of his *History of England, from the Fall of Wolsey to the Defeat of the Spanish Armada*, Froude stated that he had consulted 400,000 references. Nobody wishes to dispute his word, but to consult is not necessarily to read, mark, learn and inwardly digest any more than to consult a medical specialist is a guarantee that the treatment specified will be followed. Hasty generalization often covers a multitude of sins. As to the storm of criticism that followed the publication of his works on the Carlyles, there are so many sides to the question that dozens of volumes and articles have been devoted to the controversy. In a marginal note Freeman bludgeoned Froude with the comment that he was "certainly the vilest brute that ever wrote a book", and he hoped to live to embowel him.

Froude's philosophy of history may be summed-up in two of his own sentences: "One lesson and only one history may be said to repeat with distinctness; that the world is built somehow on moral foundations; that in the long run it is well with the good; in the long run it is ill with the wicked. But this is no science; it is no more than the old doctrine taught long ago by the Hebrew prophets." Frederic Harrison, not the least sparing of critics, suggests that Froude wrote his *History* to prove that Providence was always on the side of the Reformers, the Reformation being to him the greatest incident in English annals. "Then," adds Harrison, "he justifies his preposterous hallucination of looking for truth in Acts of Parliament: 'The preambles of Acts of Parliament did actually represent the sincere opinion of the educated laymen of England.' This is one of the main sources of Froude's errors. The preambles of Tudor Acts were hardly more veracious than the proclamations of Philip the Second or Catherine de Medicis. If Mr. Froude had only had a year or two of training in the Courts of Law or the House of Commons, or in public affairs! He seems as innocent of public life as an old-fashioned parson in a retired country parish."

No historian, it is reasonable to suggest, knows it all;

certainly none is without flaw or blemish. "The historian and the dramatist alike represent the actions of men", as Froude avowed. "If the historian would represent truly he must represent as the dramatist does." Accepting this opinion, whatever Froude's faults in the matter of interpretation may be, he most assuredly presented his characters as flesh and blood and not as puppets. He was a most excellent propagandist for the Protestant cause. His early experience with Newman's *Lives of the English Saints*, when he had to deal with the legendary miracles of the legendary St. Neot, seems to have eaten into his very soul. Looking at Froude's life from a psychological angle, and remembering the lack of tenderness shown to him as a child, Mr. Lytton Strachey, a modern iconoclast, suggested that the heavy hand of his father lay all too heavily on the historian. With an irony that seems to be woven into the warp and woof of the tapestry of life, in some careers more noticeably than in others, Froude succeeded to the chair of Modern History vacated by the death of his implacable antagonist Edward Augustus Freeman.

Freeman, the author of a weighty book—in more senses than one—on the Norman Conquest and of other literary pantechnicons, was the antithesis of Froude. He looked at human affairs from an essentially political angle, caring little about the social and industrial life which appeals to the general reader, whom he rather spurned, and careless of the picturesque. His interests were limited, which is not a good fault in an historian. He was querulous, but, like Samuel Johnson, he was a bear with a tender heart, as the volumes of his *Life and Letters* edited by Dean W. R. W. Stephens, of Winchester, show. If Froude was slovenly in his interpretation of evidence, Freeman peered at it with the intense penetration of a microscope. Not that he never made slips, for that is asking for the impossible, but they were rare. We certainly owe him a debt of gratitude for taking his stand with those who would rid the language of jargon.

Metaphysics is not a branch of history, but a science in itself, yet history is so all-embracing that as the greater

necessarily includes the less, so no knowledge is without a bearing on it. "Mansel and that lot," as Freeman termed members of a certain school of thought of which Henry Longueville Mansel was the leading exponent, upset his mental equilibrium entirely. "They seem to me," he said in his blunt, forthright way, "simply to bamboozle one with hard words—I am not clear that the words have any meaning at all. They seem to me to be pure gibberish, which would be just as much to the purpose if you read it backwards." That, applied to history, constantly needs repetition if it is to illuminate the darkness of man's passage through life. Barren pedantry makes confusion worse confounded. Fortunately it carries with it its own nemesis: it remains unread except by the pedants.

Freeman's insistence on the unity of history—"the history of man is one in all ages"—foreshadowed by Kant, was heavily discounted by his limiting it to the Aryan nations in Europe, which he saw as one unbroken drama. It was as though, having glimpsed the whole wide world, a sea fog suddenly descended and limited his vision to one puny continent. Bryce saw the matter with unqualified clarity: "Whatever happens in any part of the globe has now a significance for every other part. World History is tending to become One History." There is neither ancient nor modern. They are useful terms and nothing more, suggesting a division at once mystical and mythical that from the very circumstances of the case cannot direct with the clear precision of a signpost or mark an area with the definiteness of boundary stones. Freeman was of the opinion that a line between ancient and modern might be drawn if the modern period was held to begin with the first beginnings of the recorded history of Aryan Europe.

His sincerity is beyond question. He sacrificed an income of £500 a year or more for his political opinions, severing his connection with the *Saturday Review* because it was Turcophile in sympathy, and he had no love to waste on the Turks.

Here perhaps it may not be out of place to interpolate a

brief reference to the "Perish India" speech with which his name came to be associated in the public mind. Incidentally it illustrates the grave evil that may result when a word or two is wrenched from its context and made an utterly untruthful shibboleth. The occasion was a meeting in London in 1876 to oppose Beaconsfield's Eastern policy. "Perish the interests of England," said Freeman, "perish our dominion in India, rather than that we should strike one blow or speak one word on behalf of the wrong against the right." He held a watching brief for small nations, whose claim to independence he defended with passionate conviction. Freeman's pet belief was that "History is past politics". It is, but it also embraces much more.

If we follow the ruling of those who believe in the unity of history, agreeing with Prof. James Harvey Robinson that "in its amplest meaning it includes every trace and vestige of everything that man has done or thought since first he appeared on the earth", the prime importance of the study needs no further emphasis. Robinson's definition is, of course, so comprehensive as to be incomprehensible. We must fine it down to workable proportions, lest in attempting to grasp all we secure nothing, and we must fine it down to individual requirements.

The ordinary man and woman, immersed in the common round of life, compelled through sheer force of circumstances to earn their living in pursuits they may or may not enjoy, have few hours to devote to intensive study. They will be well advised if they begin by reading a book such as Wells's *Outline of History* or DeWitt's *Brief World History* as a preliminary. The former study, despite its over-emphasis of certain points, its under-statements, its special pleadings and its omissions does furnish one with a picture that is not too crowded. It may then be well to descend from the universal to the particular, say to the study of one's own country, such as Dr. G. M. Trevelyan's *History of England*. You will not feel cramped or parochial after surveying so wide a field, because in the earlier centuries there were many comings from the continent of Europe and in later times much reaching out to remoter lands.



Erasmus longed that the husbandman might repeat portions of the Bible to himself "as he follows the plough, and that the weaver should hum them to the tune of his shuttle, that the traveller should beguile with these stories the tedium of his journey". That ambition was doubtless fulfilled to an appreciable extent. Is it too much to hope that perhaps in course of time the agriculturist and the operative, the clerk and the housewife may relieve their ennui by reading and reflecting on the long and wonderful serial story connected with their pursuits? The man who complained that he spent most of his lifetime lying on his back giving a half-turn to an endless succession of screws might reflect occasionally, as he did his semi-automatic job, on the happiness and misery that metal brought into the world, of the army of toilers who played a part in the shaping of the little contrivance that gives him an ache and also affords the means by which he earns his daily bread.

Woman, whose work is never done, according to the old adage, was probably the first farmer and weaver, the pioneer user of the splinter of bone that gave the needle to the world. There is something ennobling about that. The humble clerk, loathing the very name as suggestive of an inferior class of the black-coated, might take fresh heart if he recollected that the word originally stood for a scholar, and that the term "clerical error" was coined because the only individuals capable of making a mistake in writing or ciphering were educated folk. His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury and the lesser lights of the Church are all clerks in holy orders. So-called menial labour is a misnomer. A king is under an obligation to the dustman, and indebted to the sewerman. Each of them may menialise his work, or exalt it.

The dire need for a wider outlook was emphasized in a volume entitled *Sweden Speaks*, published in Stockholm in 1940 and as a translation in London two years later, in which a number of prominent nationals told something of the story of England for the benefit of their fellows. The subjects dealt with were British imperialism, trade, sea power, the parliamentary and social systems, education,

sport, literature, the theatre, art, scientific and medical research, and religion—a fairly comprehensive list. Herr Gustaf Hellström pointed out in his Introduction that it is only within the last fifty years that English culture has exerted any kind of influence on the great Scandinavian country other than in and around Gothenburg. He notes that "In spite of the obvious similarity in our ideas on the social structure, in spite of the similarity in our national character, and of the increased interchange both of spiritual and material values between the two nations, the Englishman as a person is still curiously unknown to us—much to the joy and profit of unscrupulous foreign propaganda". He holds that the Englishman himself is largely to blame for this on account of his complex personality, and after stating that he has been involved in more wars than any other European, adds that he is the most "civilian" of them all.

Herr Hellström pays warm tribute to the great influence of Thomas Arnold in the fourteen years he was headmaster of Rugby previous to becoming Professor of History at Oxford. "In little more than ten years he had done for his countryman that which Hitler, almost exactly a century later and in the same space of time, was to do for his. He had created a national ideal of manhood. But here the similarity stops short; there is hardly another point of resemblance between Hitler's 'heroic man' and the gentleman. The modern hero's education is founded on 'you must'; the gentleman's on 'you ought'. The former takes his orders from an autocratic government whose morals are determined by opportunism and the prevalent distribution of power. The latter is guided by a few highly-cultured individuals well aware of their responsibility towards those principles and values which have been so laboriously evolved during the long history of man."

Whatever truth there may be in this diagnosis of character, it suggests in the most emphatic way that Britain should do far more than she has hitherto done to tell her story to other nations, and to relate it in an interesting, straightforward way, without fear or favour to ourselves. Let our warts be revealed as in Cromwell's portrait. We shall be

all the more respected if we frankly admit that at times we have deserved the epithet "perfidious Albion". An attractive series of brochures for the general reader would probably do far more lasting good than expensive winings and dinings for carefully-selected guests, and while I should be the last person in the world to deprecate the value of lectures, the written word remains while the spoken word departs. We must be neither squeamish nor afraid. Believing that open confession is good for the soul—particularly on the part of others—let us try to be openly and honestly frank with ourselves. Our national sins are not unique. Expose them! There is nothing indecent in the naked truth.

Chatty in diction, brightly garnished with good illustrations that amplify the text, this projected series of publications should appear in the language of the countries for which they are primarily intended. The old objection that British trade catalogues for foreign service were usually beautifully produced but written in English, and therefore as understandable as double Dutch to the majority of the recipients may have been eliminated. Many able works bearing the imprints of British publishers ought to be translated, but never are. It might serve a useful purpose if some of them were subsidized by the Government. Doubtless the long list of aggrieved authors would be increased, but that is scarcely a matter of international importance.

The essential point is that Britain is misunderstood abroad, just as Britain, all too often, fails to appreciate the contributions to knowledge made by other countries. This serious defect ought to be eliminated, and without delay. Perhaps the ideal plan would be to secure the collaboration of British and foreign historians. The latter would be able to indicate points that puzzle and therefore need special attention, and their ideas on the method and manner of approach would be extremely valuable.

Prof. Alfred Zimmern suggested to the League of Nations, which promised so much and performed so little, that man's needs and desires had brought about a world-wide civilization, and his next task was to discover its institutions. In words that bite as with acid, Dr. A. N. Whitehead pointed

out that "the discoveries of the nineteenth century were in the direction of professionalism, so that we are left with no expansion of wisdom and with greater need of it. Wisdom is the fruit of a balanced development. It is this balanced growth of individuality which it should be the aim of education to secure. The most useful discoveries of the immediate future would concern the furtherance of this aim without detriment to the necessary intellectual professionalism."

The first commandment, "Let there be light", thunders at us at every turn. The professional historian is well able to look after himself, wet-nursed as he is by learned bodies and equally learned publications in rich and stodgy variety. The big public—the million copies a day public—is largely left to its own resources, though University Extension lectures and the Workers' Educational Association have not laboured in vain. They have helped to open the windows of the mind, and it is sincerely to be hoped that the plan for adult colleges put forward by Mr. R. A. Butler, President of the Board of Education, may be put into operation with the least possible delay. Then perhaps it will be possible to reduce the probationary period of the majority, if a statement made in 1935 by Dr. Francis Underhill, Dean of Rochester, be correct. "For a long time to come, at any rate," he avowed, "the great majority will be simple and unthoughtful".

## CHAPTER VII

### WARFARE OR WELFARE?

MOUNTAINS of words have been piled up on the question of nationalism. There is something wrong with our own home if we do not prefer it to that of our neighbour. On the other hand we may learn much by mutual observation and discussion. We may find out how to better it and ourselves. The man without a country is in sorry plight. Millions of exiles testify to that distressing fact at the present time. The New Order in western Europe and in eastern Asia made a vast army of helpless people realize as never before that their Homeland was sacred soil, though of the earth earthy and perhaps teeming with imperfections. Those who return, though conditions will have altered, will probably do so with this affection greatly accentuated. They will also, it is to be presumed, take with them either a bitter hatred of the country of their enforced sojourn or something akin to liking. Thus tares and wheat will be sowed. In what proportion the harvest will be is not evident, but history suggests the likelihood of a bloody reaping unless what is good in the Atlantic Charter is winnowed and garnered for the service of all nationalities, principalities and Powers.

Fifteen years before the Great Breakdown, Dr. E. Lyttleton spoke with prophetic insight when he told an audience at the Working Men's College, London, that we had either got to learn how to get on as brothers, in other words to support the League of Nations, or else allow it to break up, in which case there remained only one alternative—a pit of ruin more ghastly than had ever been imagined by mankind. Telling his listeners to read only "the very greatest historians", the speaker referred to the kind of books that were given to boys of an earlier generation. They only mentioned one nation in the world, namely England. If any other was referred to it was because it had got in



the way, and the succeeding chapter told "how we banged her out of it".

Lucian, the Greek satirist, who flourished about A.D. 120-180, taught that "A writer of history ought, in his writing, to be a foreigner without a country, living under his own law only, subject to no king, nor caring what any man would like or dislike". This, of course, is an impracticable proposition, but the Swiss historian Eduard Fueter succeeded in writing a book on *World History, 1815-1920* which approached the impartial.

Internationalism and Party make strange bed-fellows. In many minds the former, by a confusion of ideas, has become definitely and almost exclusively associated with Socialism. The world is of no Party; it embraces all schools of political thought. Internationalism does not cut out love of one's own country but enlarges the borders. In days of peace we do not cease trading with lands whose politics we regard with suspicion. We are only too glad to sell them our products and to buy from them things we need. That, to say the least, is rather selfish. It suggests that eye to the main chance which caused Napoleon to dub Britain as a nation of shopkeepers, though he borrowed the term from Louis XIV. Not that the fault is indigenous to the United Kingdom. The roots of the tree of selfishness extend to every land and every clime.

The time may come when an awkward situation arises, as it did in 1941 when Russia was attacked by Germany. Without so much as a blush or the quiver of an eyelid statesmen and others had to attempt to square the circle. Of course reservations were made by both Church and State. We did not agree with everything that went on in Russia, but then the internal affairs of other States were no concern of ours, which quite obviously they are, as the goings-on in Germany from the time of Hitler's ascendancy most assuredly proved. Stalin, having been damned by bell, book and candle, was suddenly transformed into an angel of light wielding the sword of deliverance. We saw good points in the various Five-Year Plans that had hitherto escaped our notice. They certainly stood both the Soviet

Union and ourselves in good stead. We were all wise after the event ; few were so before it, which would have indicated true wisdom.

I merely refer to the matter of "our brave Allies the Russians" because it so ably demonstrates the foolishness of passing judgment on scanty evidence, and the imperative need for a more intensive study of the "foreigner". Half an hour a day of the time wasted in reverie or pottering about doing nothing in particular might be spared with advantage for reading or reflection on our fellows. Public opinion is a gossamer web that binds with wires of steel. Individually you and I may not be able to accomplish much, but men and women of like tastes can form study groups and discussion classes to their mutual advantage. We know what can happen when two or three determined people come together. History has much to say of crowds, but it has also something to say about small gatherings. The genesis of the Blood Bath into which the world was plunged in 1939 was the German Workers' Party, consisting at first of no more than half a dozen members. Lance-corporal Adolf Hitler joined them. The name was changed to the National Socialist Workers' Party, with the new recruit as beer-hall orator-in-chief. He became the Leader of the Third Reich and titular, perhaps actual, head of one of the most powerful armies ever massed to murder.

However narrow-minded an individual may be, it will be agreed that he or she usually dislikes being classified as such. The fanatic, picking out the bits and pieces of history that square with his theory, will not find it difficult to discover confirmation of whatever he hopes to find. The level-headed, with no such purpose in view, will realize that his outlook is being broadened, and that there are usually two or more sides of a question. The study of history, to quote Prof. Robert McElroy, "is the best means of making popular verdicts right". Apropos of this, a good story is told by Dr. H. A. L. Fisher. Robert Reid and Bryce were staying, when young men, with Mr. R. W. Raper, of Trinity College, Oxford, and each separately confided to his

host his opinion of the other. "I like your friend Reid," said the future author of *Modern Democracies* and ambassador, "but he won't go far, he's much too narrow." "Bryce is a good fellow," avowed Reid, the Lord Loreburn and Lord Chancellor of tomorrow, "but I don't expect a great career for him, he is far too versatile."

Two years before the outbreak of the First World War, Prof. Thomas Seccombe thought he discerned that history was just on the point of beginning to teach the nations to know themselves. He held that the highest application of the study prepared the mind for the future by gradually adjusting it to existing conditions and by gradually emancipating it from the nightmares, the misunderstandings, and the hallucinations of the past. Evidently the little leaven was insufficient to leaven the whole lump. The experiment will have to be tried again. "Smoke," as Herbert Spencer complained when an alleged smoke-consuming apparatus failed to work, "would not behave as I expected it to do."

That Grand Old Man of peace, Dr. Nicholas Murray Butler, President of Columbia University, smiling at those who hold that human nature does not change, points out that if this were correct the modern territorial State could not have merged from the unity of the Roman Empire nor national patriotism from local patriotisms. When Sir Esme Howard was British Ambassador to the United States he remarked that it was not until he had grown up that he learned for the first time that other countries produced men as great as Britain did in many branches of human activity. In his view the general conception of history was distorted if it omitted to give from the first a clear general idea of the great deeds of great men in other countries. Which reminds me of Sir Henry Wootton's humorous assertion that a diplomatist was a good man sent to lie abroad for his country's good, and of a remark made to Count Pourtalès, his Ambassador in Russia, by Kaiser William II. His Excellency had ventured to assert to his Imperial Majesty that nobody could see more than from three to four years into the future. "The gift sometimes occurs," was the reply of

the All Highest. "Among sovereigns frequently, among statesmen seldom, among diplomatists never."

Personally I find it difficult to appreciate the point of view of those who hate the word "internationalism" with an exceeding bitter hatred and regard any suggestion of a World Commonwealth as handing over the scene of man's activities to the devil. Perhaps it is the oftentimes unnoticed difference between a capital "I" and a small "i" that confuses, for in the former case the word refers to the principles advocated by the Communist International, dissolved by Marshal Stalin in 1943, and in the latter to the principle of community of interests or action between different nations. Quite a pother was raised in the United States some time ago because Bishop Paul Jones, of the Episcopal diocese of Southern Ohio, asserted that the Stars and Stripes fluttering at the masthead outside schools was dangerous fetish worship which suggested thoughts of war to children. Precisely the same thing might have been said of Norway, second to none in its love of peace. In western Scandinavia the white-bordered blue cross on a red background is evident almost everywhere, from public buildings and private dwellings to miniature replicas mounted on stands that are a decorative feature of dining-tables. It signifies no more and no less than a love of country, without which a man, in the present state of affairs, may well be regarded as something of an outcast. To regard the symbol of a State as necessarily an organ of belligerency is sheer nonsense. That it may be used as propaganda for chauvinism we have only too good reason to know. The swastika, found in many parts of the world in various forms, probably originated in Mesopotamia. In northern Europe it is called the *fylfot*, or hammer of Thor. The Manx emblem is a version of it, but has never been associated with the sinister meaning attached to the insignia of the Nazis.

That composite personage the Man in the Street is apt to regard internationalism (with a small "i") as a new vision born about the time of the inception of the League of Nations, which also was no novel idea. In the second decade of the

sixteenth century William of Ciervia and John Sylvagius, Chancellor of Burgundy, sought to promote a congress of kings at Cambray, the suggested representatives being the Emperor Maximilian, Francis I of France, Henry VIII of England and Charles V of Spain. "They were to enter, in the most solemn manner, into mutual and indissoluble engagements to preserve peace with each other, and consequently peace throughout Europe." Unfortunately "this momentous business" was brought to naught because "certain persons who get nothing by peace and a great deal by war threw obstacles in the way, which prevented this truly kingly purpose from being carried into execution". Not without a show of wit, Erasmus adds, "After this great disappointment, I sat down and wrote, by desire of John Sylvagius, my *Querela Pacis*. But since that period things have been growing worse; and I believe I must soon compose the Epitaph instead of the *Complaint of Peace*, as she seems to be dead and buried and not very likely to revive".

Whether Sully or his master was responsible for the Great Design of Henry IV of France, "by which all Europe might be regulated and governed as one great family" and saved "those immense sums" required for the maintenance of soldiers, fortresses and stores, and "free them for ever from the fear of those bloody catastrophes so common in Europe" is uncertain. It was apparently favoured by Queen Elizabeth. In his *Mémoires* the Duke asserts that she appreciated the difficulties in the two principal points of the suggested plan, namely of religion and the equality of the Powers, but "did not appear to me at all to doubt of its success. . . . She further said that its execution by any other means than that of arms would be very desirable, as this had always something odious in it; but she confessed that indeed it would be hardly possible to begin it any other wise".

Henry IV or Sully, perhaps both, although modern authorities lean to the view that the Duke was mainly, if not solely, responsible for the Great Design, did not foresee insurmountable problems in the matter of religious difficulties.



Those which "principally prevail" they divided into the Roman, the Reformed, and the Protestant. They would be preserved and even strengthened. New sects or opinions were to be suppressed on their appearance. Should the Czar of Russia, who was regarded as an infidel, "refuse to enter into the association after it is proposed to him, he ought to be treated like the Sultan of Turkey, deprived of his possessions in Europe, and confined to Asia only".

For this purpose each member of the League was to contribute, "in proportion to their several abilities", towards the necessary munitions and costs, the former of which was estimated at 270,000 foot soldiers, 50,000 cavalry, and 120 ships or galleys. The cynic will probably comment on this proposed resort to arms as the first item of the universal peace programme, but will do well to remember that President Wilson said that armed force was in the background of the plan of 1919.

The readjustment of various territories, particularly of the swollen possessions of the House of Austria—the mark of the cloven hoof is rather obvious here—was also a preliminary article. The steps taken by Charles V and his son to arrive at universal monarchy had "rendered this severity as just as it was necessary". In Henry's project, says Sully, "France received nothing for itself but the glory of distributing them (i.e. the territories) with equity", but he points out that ten districts, including Cambray and Namur, "might more suitably be annexed to France than to any other nation", and would be divided into distinct governments under French princes or lords.

The model of the Great General Council of Europe was that of the amphictyonies of Greece. The Emperor, the Pope, the monarchs of France, Spain, England, Denmark, Sweden, Lombardy and Poland, and the republic of Venice were each to be represented by four commissioners; inferior republics or Powers by two plenipotentiaries apiece. They were to form the Senate, and be re-chosen every three years. Councils of an inferior degree, responsible to the General Council, were suggested for France, Spain, England and the

Low Countries. Various events favoured the Great Design, but many others conspired against it, and the hand of an assassin ended the project and Henry's life in 1610. The Duke survived his master by thirty-one years. The first two volumes of his *Mémoires* appeared in 1634, and the remaining two in 1662.

The declaration known as the Holy Alliance made in September, 1815, by Russia, Austria and Prussia, was so-called because it avowed that those States from henceforth would be run on Christian principles. An open invitation was extended to others of like Faith. Castlereagh, the British Foreign Secretary, characterized it as "a piece of sublime mysticism and nonsense", but all the crowned heads in Europe and the President of the Swiss Republic signified their assent, and the Regent of Great Britain sent his blessing. The original signatories considered themselves "as members of one and the same Christian nation", who were "merely delegated by Providence to govern three branches of One Family . . . thus confessing that the Christian world, of which they and their people form a part, has, in reality, no other Sovereign than Him to whom alone power really belongs. . . ."

Among the results of the more practical Congress of Vienna, which brought peace to the continent following the Napoleonic War, was a return to the well-tried policy of the balance of power to prevent undue military preponderance on the part of any one country or group of countries. The Congress, as represented by the Quadruple Alliance of Russia, Austria, Prussia and Great Britain, formed in November, 1815, met from time to time until it petered out following Britain's refusal to attend the gathering held at St. Petersburg (Leningrad) towards the end of 1825.

Canning, who followed Castlereagh after that much-harassed statesman had committed suicide, tersely summed up the situation in nine words: "Every nation for itself, and God for us all." Britain refused to meddle with the internal affairs of continental countries, dissociating herself from suppressing revolutions and such like, and when

Spanish America revolted, stoutly maintained her right to do so. It was at Canning's suggestion that James Monroe, President of the United States, aware of the intention of the Allies to help Spain in the recovery of her colonies, declared the famous doctrine that bears his name, the germane passage being, "We should consider any attempt on their part to extend their system to any portion of this hemisphere as dangerous to our peace and safety". The policy of the United States, the Declaration of Isolationism, in regard to Europe was "not to interfere in the internal concern of any of its Powers". All and sundry were warned that "the American continents are henceforth not to be considered as subjects for future colonization by European Powers".

Dante, who died over 620 years ago, was the prophet of Italian nationalism, but he also glimpsed the possibility of world unity, picturing in *De Monarchia* a federation of States with the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire as supreme ruler and the Church subservient to him. There was then no known America, and Italy was made up of a number of warring bits and pieces. His well-beloved Florence was a city of factions. "The world," he wrote, "has become my country as the ocean is the country of the tribes of the deep." The author of the *Divine Comedy* cannot be put on the list of historians, yet in that epic he gives a vivid panorama of life in medieval times. Again and again he urged the benefit of peace, of which he knew so little. "Just as the individual can progress only in an atmosphere of quietude and wisdom," he says in *De Monarchia*, "so the human species can attain its goal more easily in a period of peace and tranquillity. This goal is divine and Christian, and therefore the *pax generalis* is the highest of all goods and indispensable to our happiness."

Writing a little over a year before the Second World War flung peace out of the window, Prof. Salvador de Madariaga formulated a World Design in which Great Britain should play the leading role because, as he asserted, she controlled the lion's share of the world, and was endowed with an unusual amount of political talent. "Not in vain has she

been allowed centuries of insular concentration, so that the collective virtues which she has cultivated in her island of peace should be spread by her over the whole world when the time for universality was ripe." As a start this most forceful of modern thinkers suggested that Great Britain should place her colonies in trust for humanity. Speaking at the P.E.N. Club in 1941, Signor J. M. Batista I Roca submitted that "Nationalism and internationalism are not incompatible; each is the complement and mainstay of the other. Internationalism begins where nationalism must end. Both imply duties: duty to one's own country, but also duty to the international community".

We have noted what a difference a capital "I" and a small "i" makes in the definition of a word. To change warfare into welfare needs no more than the substitution of two letters in writing, but in practical politics it means a change of outlook on the part of the whole world. In 1929, "between a pear and some cheese", as Aristide Briand, Premier of France, picturesquely put it, he outlined a plan which he fondly hoped would lead to a European federation. If the other nations had aided and abetted all might have been well. But no frontier barriers were removed, and no United States of Europe came into being. Like the many who were bidden to a great supper, they all with one consent began to make excuse. The nations threw brickbats at the scheme as their contributions. The various Governments nursed their grievances instead of weaning them.

Germany considered it would be vain to attempt to construct a new Europe on foundations unable to stand against "the living process of development". Hungary welcomed closer co-operation between the Powers, but could not agree to any perpetual territorial boundaries defined by the Peace Treaties of 1919-20. Great Britain's reply was non-committal. The plan faded out, but among Briand's treasures was a "golden book" containing the signatures of over 3,000,000 French people who believed that he was not selling France, as some of his critics maintained, for a vision. When he died, in 1932, the statesmen of the world

sent flattering telegrams to the President of the French Republic praising Briand's work for peace.

These references to a subject bristling with so many highly controversial points are made deliberately. Internationalism may suggest a field of study that has so far defied the wit of man. The cause of cancer has puzzled the medical profession for generations, and vast sums have been spent on research, yet neither effort nor money is withheld because of failure. The pursuit goes on. Surely the same line of argument may be applied with like anticipation of eventual triumph to the elimination of the malignant growth in the body politic.

Is war-making inherent in man's make-up? Sir Elliott Smith thought not. This brilliant exponent of the diffusionist theory of civilization—that it radiated from Egypt and was not due to independent cultures—held that "the careful analysis of all the available evidence seems to point clearly to the conclusion that until the invention of the methods of agriculture and irrigation on the large scale practised in Egypt and Babylonia, the world really enjoyed some such Golden Age of peace as Hesiod has described. Man was not driven into warfare by his instinct for pugnacity but by the greed for wealth and power which the development of civilization was responsible itself for creating".

Sir Arthur Keith, known the world over as an eminent and provocative anthropologist, shocked a great many people when he delivered his Rectorial Address at the University of Aberdeen. In referring to race prejudice, he gave it as his opinion that it meant the continuation "of Nature's old scheme of inter-tribal rivalries and eternal competition. Without competition mankind can never progress; the price of progress is competition, nay, race prejudice and, what is the same thing, national antagonism, has to be purchased, not with gold, but with life. Nature throughout the past has demanded that a people who seek independence as well as peace can obtain these privileges only in one way: by being prepared to sacrifice their blood to secure them. Nature keeps her human orchard healthy



by pruning; war is her pruning-hook. We cannot dispense with her services. This harsh and repugnant forecast of man's future is wrung from me. The future of my dreams is a warless world". Sir Arthur Keith's remedy was that we should give our prejudices a place in our civilization but keep them under the control of reason.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### HISTORIANS AT WORK

THE influence of historians and philosophers has been greater in Germany than in Britain. Many of those who made an outstanding name for themselves offered much incense at the national shrine. They flourished big sticks as well as pens, blew trumpets and beat drums to emphasize the vast importance of the kingdom of Prussia or the Hohenzollern Empire, as the case might be.

Immanuel Kant is an outstanding exception. He published his *Project of a Perpetual Peace* in 1795, declaring that freedom and justice were the bases of universal self-government; justice would emerge from freedom, peace from justice, self-government from peace, with disarmament as a necessary and crowning corollary. With the American Revolution in mind he held that for this purpose a republic was more suited than a monarchy. "If happy circumstances," he wrote, "bring it about that a powerful and enlightened people form themselves into a republic, which by its very nature must be disposed in favour of perpetual peace, this will furnish a centre of federative union for other States to attach themselves to, and thus secure the conditions of liberty among all States, according to the idea of the right of nations; and such a union would extend wider and wider, in the course of time, by the addition of further connections of this kind." The World State might be "a federation regulated by law according to the right of nations as concerted in common". Kant's philosophy of history was founded on the assumption of a universal plan in nature. He held that there was a perfectly rational purpose in the development of events, which moved towards the fulfilment of a destiny marked out by Providence. In other words, he believed in a law of progress.

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel pinned his faith to what he called the World Spirit, which manifested itself in every

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form of human and physical activity. He elevated the State to the stature of a god; its interests were paramount. There was no people like the German people. "The German Spirit is the Spirit of the new world," he heralded; "its aim is the realization of absolute truth. . . . The destiny of the German peoples is to be the bearers of the Christian principle." It is inconceivable that Christ taught the virtues of absolutism and its necessary adjunct militarism, which Hegel believed in most emphatically. To render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's is not the surrender of body, soul and spirit to the State, the absolute power on earth according to the historian. Might is right, and war brings out the highest of virtues; such were Hegel's convictions. They not only found much sympathy but formulated a gospel and a cult that grew with increasing strength.

"The conflicts arising between the interests of several States, each an absolute power," he proclaimed, "not only necessitate but justify wars, States being above treaties when their respective interests are at stake. For a State to be bound by a given word would be a flagrant contradiction of the very essence of the State, which is absolute freedom of action." War toughens; peace makes a nation flabby. Hegel's axiom that "The sceptre of Europe belongs to the German people, and it is only legitimate that all the weaker races should submit to the Germans", rang through the land with the piercing shrill of a clarion.

Johann Gottlieb Fichte proclaimed from the housetops that the highest degree of morality which a man was capable of attaining could only be found in war, and begged his students to enlist in the sacred cause of Prussia. Stein, who had done so much to arouse Prussia against Napoleon, felt that it was for the honour of the nation to collect and set out properly the monuments of its history, because history was an efficacious means of exciting patriotism and sustaining it against the influence of self-interest. Arthur Schopenhauer, the grim jester of *The World as Will and Idea*, who narrowly escaped being born in London instead of in Danzig, taught that only through history did a nation become completely conscious of itself.

Barthold Georg Niebuhr was a pioneer in his *Roman History*, the first two volumes of which were published in 1812. They were afterwards revised, indeed almost rewritten, and a third volume was added. "If every positive conclusion of Niebuhr's had been refuted," says a leading authority, "his claim to be considered the first who dealt with the ancient history of Rome in a scientific spirit would remain unimpaired, and the new principles introduced by him into historical research would lose nothing of their importance." He focused interest on things rather than on personalities. Considering the period in which he lived, when the State which Napoleon had said no longer existed was working with feverish but unpretentious energy in the direction of resurrection, it is not surprising that his work pointed a moral and adorned a tale.

What Rome had done Prussia could do; the scattered German States would be united because the spirit of the old legions was living in the hearts of the people. Niebuhr had already shown in the notes to his translation of the first Philippic of Demosthenes that he was in sympathy with Stein, and in one of his later miscellaneous literary contributions sought to justify the annexation of part of Saxony to Prussia in 1814, although the population as a whole had not the slightest wish to be incorporated. The transfer took place in the following year. Prussia became a Great Power.

Although a Lutheran, Leopold von Ranke's religious sympathies did not prejudice him from dealing honestly with the Pontiffs who fought the Reformation, whose lives he told in his *Ecclesiastical and Political History of the Popes during the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*. Macaulay hailed the book as a classic. This sense of fairness, however, was not extended to Prussia's neighbours, for Ranke suggested to Bismarck the advisability of seizing Switzerland, and he also advocated the acquisition of territory in other directions.

When he was nearly ninety years of age this hardy old veteran of the pen began the dictation of a *History of the World*, devoting eleven hours a day to the task. Another historian who refused to waste time was Theodor Mommsen.

Both he and Ranke believed with Goethe that when a man is old he must do more than when he is young. Mommsen read books when waiting for trams, continued to peruse them when he had found a seat, and on one occasion remained for an hour when the vehicle had come off the track. It was an article of faith with the conductors that Herr Professor was never to be disturbed until he reached his destination. When, on this occasion, the noise of levers and jacks attracted Mommsen's attention, he got up and went to the door muttering, "Ah, we seem to have come to a standstill!" He seldom, if ever, took a holiday, and toiled seven days a week.

Like Niebuhr he devoted his attention to the fascinating story of Rome. His *History of Rome to the Death of Cæsar* is based on a wonderful collection of legal inscriptions which he and a number of associates carefully copied from the stone or bronze records in many parts of Italy, a labour which took a matter of three years. His trio of volumes, published between 1854 and 1856, was intended for general reading, and the public perused the work with avidity. Not to be familiar with it was almost to dub oneself unlettered. When translated into Italian it received an equally enthusiastic welcome. Believing, as he did, that in writing history it should be regarded as an art, Mommsen took infinite pains to keep the narrative moving.

He regarded Cæsar as "the complete and perfect man", thereby doing much to instil in the Germans a belief in dictatorship. Even his old friend W. Warde Fowler could not see eye-to-eye with him in this, nor in his summing-up of Pompey, Cicero and Cato. "But these are small matters," he felt, "compared with the lesson taught to Europe of the government, the economy, the family life and morality, the religion, the literature, and the law of the great empire which preceded the slow growth of our modern States." When Mommsen became editor of the *Corpus Inscriptionum* he commanded an army of foraging experts who literally scrounged every country where the Romans obtained a foothold; Italy alone yielded about 36,000 inscriptions, and Great Britain some 1,500.



Although Mommsen assured his fellow countrymen that to rest on one's laurels is to rest uncomfortably, and severely criticized Britain's part in the South African War, he stoutly maintained until his death in 1903, a year after he had been awarded the Nobel Prize for literature, that Britain and Germany had many interests in common. In the opinion of Prof. Antoine Guillaud, Mommsen's praise of the Sullas, Catilines and Cæsars did much to bring about the reaction against the Christian conception of human life. On the other hand, he warned that belligerence can be overdone. "Have a care," he said, "lest in this State, which has been at once a power in arms and a power in intelligence, the intelligence should vanish and nothing but the pure military State should remain." One of Mommsen's contemporaries was Heinrich von Sybel, the student and friend of Ranke. He subverted his undoubted talents to political ends, writing in a biased way of both France and Germany, hating the one and bolstering up the other, advocating the pro-Prussian beliefs of his master.

None of these writers can be compared for full-blooded Prussianism, now a recognized synonym for inhumanity, with Heinrich von Treitschke, whose works include the *History of Germany in the Nineteenth Century*, an incomplete study which ends at 1847. Physically deaf, he was mentally blind to all evidence that threatened to upset his fixed belief in the supremacy of the State, heartily agreeing with Machiavelli that "the State is Force". He spurned even the reading of documents that he thought represented a contrary point of view. Throwing overboard his early Liberalism, Treitschke found the blood-and-iron policy of Bismarck too weak, and fervently declared that one must know how to break laws when the good of the State required it.

He preached his flaming evangel with vehement sincerity, firing his audiences with an enthusiasm that would not have disgraced Adolf Hitler, the most ardent follower of his polemics. Treitschke declared that an icy impartiality was against the historical spirit, and acted up to his belief in both hall and study. He was a propagandist rather than an historian; an advocate and not a judge. Writing in

August, 1871, he said, "We Germans who know Germany and France, can judge better what suits the Alsatians than those unhappy people themselves. . . . We mean, in spite of them, to give back to them their true selves."

Treitschke speaks about the educational power of war, sneers at what he terms the good-hearted kindness of the Germans outside Prussia, upholds the partition of Poland by Frederick the Great, and with delightful naïveté and lack of humour says this in his panegyric of that monarch: "He declared openly that he would not defend Hanover for ungrateful England a second time: he even once forbade the passage through his dominions of the English mercenaries, bought in Germany, because he was revolted by this sordid traffic in human beings, *and still more because he needed the young men of the Empire for his own army.*" The italics are mine.

Friedrich Nietzsche, who cordially disliked Treitschke and all his works, was not an historian, but he played an important part as a formative influence. He dealt with ethics, which is of necessity a branch of history. "Range in fancy over the whole circle of the sciences," writes Jacob Gould Schurman, "and you will find there is no place for ethics save as a branch of human history." Granting that Nietzsche was both an egoist and a megalomaniac, and discounting his assertion that he was at one and the same time the most terrible man that had ever existed and also the most beneficent, there was much truth in his assertion that he was dynamite.

Holding that the world was divided into masters and slaves, whose ideals were courage and strength in the one and patience and self-sacrifice in the other, the idea of the blond superman of the master class who was to rule mankind was seized on with avidity by the Germans, more especially as it was associated with an exaltation of war, though in this respect he was not thinking especially of German expansion. He was so little enamoured of the Germans that as his father was partly of Slav origin he regarded himself as essentially a Pole. Nietzsche would get rid of the "herd morality" of Christianity. The Anglo-Saxons, he

avowed, are the only moral race, and therefore the only hypocritical one. He held that nationalism produced eternal subdivision into petty States with politics on a municipal scale, and as long ago as 1885 asserted that United Europe was preparing itself slowly and hesitatingly. Nietzsche held no brief for *Deutschland über Alles*—Germany over all—but the nation took him to its bosom and cordially supported his belief that the twentieth century would witness wars for the dominion of the world.

The fundamental principle of his doctrine, the Will to Power, was embodied in the superman, who might be an individual or a race. One of the supermen held up for admiration is Cesare Borgia, to whom murder was of little consequence. This is not surprising, since the philosopher believed that "Nothing is true, everything is allowed". His aim was the exact antithesis of that of Spinoza, the Dutch thinker of the seventeenth century, whose principle was to hold no man in hatred, contempt or derision, neither to mock, to bewail, nor to denounce anyone, but to understand them. To Nietzsche Democracy and Socialism were twin evils which he regarded as levelling-down processes. Nietzsche was a contributing factor in the making of the First World War because by interpreting his writings as they wanted them to be understood, by giving them a definite pro-German twist, expositors of the creed undoubtedly aided and abetted the nation's Will to Power. His writings influenced Annunzio and Mussolini. The logical sequel to the Nietzschean philosophy of violence was the cold-blooded paganism of the Nazis. Nietzsche, according to Alfred Rosenberg in his *Myth of the Twentieth Century*, was "almost the only man of distant vision", the others being Lagarde and Wagner.

Friedrich von Bernhardi was born in 1849, five years after Nietzsche, and outlived him for thirty years. A thorough-paced representative of the pan-German school of thought, his *Germany and the Next War*, in which he studies the relation of armed conflict "to the great tasks of the present and the future which Providence has set before the German people as the greatest civilized people known to

history", was published in 1912 following the Morocco dispute of the year before.

The French had been asked to send a military expedition to Fez, the capital, to protect the Sultan of Morocco, whereupon the Germans, who had economic interests, adopted a threatening attitude by dispatching the gunboat *Panther* to Agadir, on the Atlantic coast. "Germany was firmly resolved not to be pushed aside," Bethmann-Hollweg, the Imperial Chancellor, told the Reichstag, but the British Government let it be known that if Berlin attacked France the latter would not fight alone. Up to the signing of an agreement on November 14 every second was tense with unrelieved anxiety, for there seemed every likelihood of war. "What the devil is to happen now?" the Kaiser had asked. According to Prince von Bülow he answered his own question by alternately raising and lowering the mailed fist. Italy seized the moment to grumble that her nationals in Tripoli were badly treated, and occupied it. This kind of procedure was to become a familiar practice a few years later. The warnings of history were disregarded.

Bernhardi does not sustain a reasoned argument. He lays down the law, making dogmatic assertions to enforce his theme, which is that the duties and obligations of the German people cannot be fulfilled without drawing the sword. "War is a biological necessity of the first importance, a regulative element in the life of mankind which cannot be dispensed with, since without it an unhealthy development will follow, which excludes every development of the race, and therefore all real civilization." He quotes the saying of Heraclitus of Ephesus that "War is the father of all things", adding that the sages of antiquity recognized this long before Darwin. So far as I am aware, the author of *The Origin of Species* made no such statement. Bernhardi cites with appreciation the assertion of Schlegel that "War is as necessary as the struggle of the elements in Nature". But the elements are blind forces, and in exactly what measure do they struggle?

He tackles the Morocco question in a footnote, contending that it was imperative to maintain the sovereignty of the

country on the basis of the Algeciras Convention of 1906, but without saying what that basis was. The principal provisions were the recognition of equal rights for foreigners and the establishment of a State Bank financed by the Great Powers. Bernhardi's real intention is revealed in his succeeding sentence: "Among other advantages, which need not be discussed here, Germany would have had the country secured to her as a possible sphere of colonization. That would have set up justifiable claims for the future."

The pseudo-historian claims that might is the supreme right, and the dispute as to what is right is decided by war. All human progress is dependent on the clashing interests and unchecked rivalry of different groups. Germany must learn to see that the maintenance of peace never can or may be the goal of a policy. The Russo-Japanese War is applauded to the echo. It was politically wise and morally justifiable, glorious alike for military prowess and political foresight. Japanese statesmen were justified by the result. The lessons of history confirm the view that wars which have been deliberately provoked by far-seeing statesmen have had the happiest results. Germany's part in the world was to stamp a great part of humanity with the impress of the German spirit. From first to last the sole aim of Bernhardi's book was to arouse animosity against Great Britain. Germany's urgent duty towards civilization, he assured his readers, could only be fulfilled by the sword.

No writer did more to foster an aggressive spirit in his native land previous to the First World War, in which he played an active part on both the Eastern and Western fronts, than Bernhardi. He afterwards had the effrontery to assert that Germany had been defeated because the Kaiser and others in high positions had not regarded his warnings with the seriousness their author felt was due to them. In a later book, a translation of which was published in England in 1920 under the title of *The War of the Future*, Bernhardi put forward the suggestion that the previous conflict was one of a series, and naturally pooh-poohed the efforts of the League of Nations.



He proved correct in surmizing that aircraft would continue to serve in the field as an integral part of the German Army, as they had done in 1914-18, and that the usefulness of the tank would be developed. It was not until 1942 that the lesson of co-operation between 'planes and troops was appreciated by Britain in the war that Bernhardi had foreseen, and the lack of sufficient moving fortresses of the right type seriously hampered the dragging campaign in Libya. This fervent believer that war is a necessary element in the life of nations and an indispensable factor of culture died in 1930.

An Englishman who became a naturalized German did much to stir up ill-feeling between the country of his birth and the land of his adoption. This was Houston Stewart Chamberlain, whose *Foundations of the Nineteenth Century* was issued in 1899, an English edition being published in 1911. It was as deliberate an attempt to arouse the national spirit as was Bernhardi's *Germany and the Next War*. Nothing is so convincing as the consciousness of the possession of race, the author postulates. The man who belongs to a distinct, pure race never loses the sense of it; "the guardian angel of his lineage is ever at his side".

Unfortunately for Chamberlain, biologists tell us that no such being exists. He was wiped out long ago by tribal intermarriage and great waves of immigration. To put it bluntly, the guardian angel is a mongrel, and probably no worse for being so. The Japanese, seeking to emulate the principal partner of the Axis, put forward the delightful theory that the aboriginal occupants of Hokkaido originally came from Europe, and that Leo Tolstoy was a typical representative. Emperor William II found Chamberlain's book much to his liking. Such excellent propaganda must have the seal of Imperial favour on it. So he ordered hundreds of copies for distribution to people of influence. This soon got noised abroad. It became "the thing" to read Chamberlain, and so the rising waters of national egoism received another tributary.

Karl Lamprecht sought to make history a science of generalized laws, believing it to be nothing but applied

psychology. It attracted much attention for a time, but the laws remain undiscovered.

Lord Balfour and Sir Flinders Petrie were among those who held that civilizations have a life cycle, that they wax and wane, have their spring, summer, autumn and winter. The belief was developed by Oswald Spengler, who devoted an enormous mass of work and words in *The Decline of the West* to prove it, principally with the idea of finding some kind of guidance for the future. Pointing the finger of scorn at contemporary philosophers and historians, he somewhat impolitely told them that whereas "we think in continents", they had failed to realize the fact. Once again the belief that "war is the creator of all great things" is repeated. The present or Faustian civilization of the West began about A.D. 900, and as, according to Spengler's reckoning, the great periods of civilization last about 1,500 years, we are quite obviously in autumn, when the leaves begin to fall. He assures us that men and women who are more interested in truth and justice than in deeds are doomed to die ignominiously. West and East will crash; the West will perish.

In 1933, when Hitler was in the ascendant, Spengler submitted that Germany could only survive if Cæsars took the place of humane reformers: "the life of one's own nation has to be gained at the cost of destroying that of others." In *The Decisive Years* he held that Prussianism was the saviour of the white race, and in *Man and Technics* that optimism is cowardice. According to the latter work, which is scarcely more than a brochure, the white peoples, instead of keeping their technical knowledge to themselves, complacently offered it to all the world. With what result? "Today more or less everywhere—in the Far East, South America, South Africa—industrial regions are in being, or coming into being, which, owing to their low scales of wages, will face us with a deadly competition. The unassailable privileges of the White races have been thrown away, squandered, betrayed."

The coloured races, in which Spengler includes the Russians, will shatter the economic organization of the

whites. Hence unemployment in the white countries, "the beginning of a catastrophe". Spengler ends on a note of sepulchral gloom. He pictures the Roman soldier whose remains were dug up at Pompeii. He died at his post, "because they forgot to relieve him. That is greatness. That is what it means to be a thoroughbred. The honourable end is the one thing that can *not* be taken from a man".

Just as the German belief that Might is Right and the State a god was based on the findings of ultra-patriotic historians and thinkers, so the Soviet Republic was founded on the materialist conception of history propounded by Karl Marx as Lenin understood it. According to Marx, economic conditions do most to shape the progress of society because they exert the greatest influence. In practice the communist principles laid down by the Jewish author of *Capital* did not work, and Lenin, who understood the virtue of compromise, was compelled to adopt what he termed State capitalism. Marx, whom Aldous Huxley terms "that old-fashioned Hebrew prophet in scientific fancy dress", was carried away by the idea that everything could be explained economically. Prof. James Harvey Robinson submits that "in the sobered and chastened form in which economists now receive the doctrine, it serves to explain far more of the phenomena of the past than any other single explanation ever offered".

Spengler was cocksure and dogmatic, a method which, by some strange paradox, invariably leaves an impression of uncertainty. Devil Doubt is always at hand to suggest the likelihood of error when writers are too sure. Prof. Arnold J. Toynbee has tackled the matter of the births, growths, declines and deaths of civilizations in a work of great learning, vast scope and almost lyrical prose. Entitled *A Study of History*, he diagnoses these matters by examining twenty-one civilizations, of which fourteen have passed away. The physical factor of environment, the psychological factor evidenced in the main by Great Men—the individual mind which works on the masses—and the incalculable religious factor are all taken into consideration in this comparative study of the efforts to rise above the primitive level which

mankind has been making for a matter of perhaps more than 6,000 years.

*A Study of History* is in many ways a provocative work; it makes the reader think until it hurts. Prof. Toynbee finds many rules that seem common to history, holding that attack from without acts as a stimulant, provided that the leaders who form the creative minority are not suffering from debility or find it necessary to endeavour to keep their positions by force rather than by merit. Believing that "ease is inimical to civilization", it may be that the historian carries his theory too far by leaving the impression that what Spengler called *Kultur* is a thing much to be desired by all. An admission, for instance, that the forests baffled the Redskin and that Americans have responded victoriously to this "sylvan challenge", rather infers that the dispossessed desired what we regard as a higher scale of living, which may be true, but is certainly not proven. In the long view the conquest by the whites was doubtless beneficial, though not necessarily to the conquered tribes.

In his Memoir of his father, Sir George Otto Trevelyan, Macaulay's nephew and biographer, Dr. G. M. Trevelyan has a little dig at "The biographical taste of the present day, half psychology and half journalism". This may or may not refer to Emil Ludwig, but it meets the case. Dr. Ludwig has written many studies on prominent personalities, including Goethe, Napoleon, Bismarck and Schliemann of Troy, his technique being what perhaps one might call a kind of psychological impressionism. His ideal, on his own confession, is to present "a portrait of incontrovertible documentary authenticity, which yet shall suggest a dramatic narrative". Neither of his favourite historians, Plutarch and Carlyle, had a loftier aim, though both, on occasion, were unduly swayed by their sympathies.

Dr. Ludwig never writes a biography without a portrait of his subject in front of him, if such be procurable. This doubtless creates the necessary atmosphere, but that he always succeeds in getting under the skin of his hero of the moment is open to question. He is too imaginative to be an exact historian, and if documentary authenticity includes

the latest research, as assuredly it should do, he evidently omitted to take it into consideration when writing *The Son of Man*. This is generally regarded as his most unsatisfactory effort, and one that suffers by comparison with Renan's *Life of Jesus*, published so long ago as 1863. When he issued his *William II* the charge was levelled at his head that he had produced a picture based on the evidence of those hostile to the then Imperial exile. To this Dr. Ludwig was able to retort that he had shown the proofs to a relation of the ex-Kaiser, who asked him to withdraw the volume because what was said was "all too true". Although the name of the person is not given, for obvious reasons, there is no need to disbelieve the statement.

Again, when he attempted, in his *July 1914*, to put the blame for the First World War on the shoulders of a comparatively few individuals, he was surely underestimating the popular appeal that the likelihood of hostilities aroused in many German hearts. His miniature of Mr. Winston Churchill is interesting: "A half-adventurer, highly gifted as a writer and as an historian, who has wandered through life writing brilliant books about military organization and about Free Trade, but always at the same time about himself, always fantastic, always lynx-eyed, always quick-footed." Long soliloquies mar Dr. Ludwig's *Lincoln*. In *Leaders of Europe* he studied Nansen, Masaryk, Briand, Rathenau, Motta, Lloyd George, Venizelos, Mussolini and Stalin directly from life. Other than the British and French representatives he regarded those chosen as the most important statesmen in their various countries at the time of writing, namely the beginning of 1934.

Something of the writer's philosophy of history is revealed in his Introduction to this work, where he suggests a masculine phase of development when the people are active and creative, and a feminine phase when they are passive. "Where the State is endowed with the divine attributes of omnipotence and omniscience," he notes, "there is no other aim in life for the individual except to serve blindly. The service of this idol which is expressed today in racial and national rivalries, in the grading of citizens into various



orders and levels of merit, in the training of the young as mere numerical items in the roll of citizenship—all this shows the lack of a creative vision and a degeneration of religion, which in its healthy stage lays emphasis on the worth of the individual." Peering into the future, he suggested that the next war would not merely be annihilating but empty of results even of itself, bringing victory to none of the nations involved in it. Revolution will follow, and "above the waters of this last deluge will stand out the ideal of world citizenship, to which our impoverished posterity will cling for rescue in their common distress".

Dr. Ludwig sets an example to all historians in that he is always entertaining. Dull history is unread history, dead as the dodo and equally beyond resurrection. In *The Germans*, published in 1942, the author painted a pageant of 2,000 years, and took to task those who continue to believe that the Germans are really very nice people who have had the misfortune to be misguided by wicked leaders. "Hitler," he assures us, "was not an adventurer cast up in Germany by the merest chance, but a truly German phenomenon; all well-intentioned efforts to make a distinction between him and the German character miss their point."

Irony broods like a shadow over history. It has crossed these pages many times. The prime mover in the pure race theory was a Frenchman and not a German, Joseph Arthur, Comte de Gobineau. Born in 1816, he produced his *Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races* in 1853, proving to his own satisfaction the superiority of the Aryans, who incidentally were not a people but a linguistic group. He warned that mixture of blood led to exhaustion. The theory met with poor appreciation in his own country, but was taken up with enthusiasm by the Germans, who were quite willing to turn a blind eye to the fact that Gobineau's admiration was for the old type of German and not his modern representative. Houston Chamberlain, an ardent disciple of Gobineau, applied it to both.

The supposition offered an excuse for the anti-Semitism that was often carried on by underground warfare, but was never far from the surface. Not that Jew-baiting

is a modern institution or indigenous to Germany, or that Jews are a race. Recent discoveries clearly indicate that from the first the Hebrews were a mixed crowd linked by their belief in one God instead of many divinities; "a religious confederacy", as Sir Flinders Petrie called it. Here again irony plays a part. Some of the characteristic traits of the Jew, at once international and yet claiming nationality, are doubtless due to the inferiority complex produced by centuries of repression; it has been well said that psychologically the most Jew-like people today are the German people, not least in their determination to make German nationalism into a religion. When the Jewish leaders of the National Liberal Group demanded constitutional reform in 1879, Bismarck paved the way by an outcry against those whom they represented.

Prof. Hugo Valentin, of Upsala University, points out in his valuable *Anti-Semitism, Historically and Critically Examined*, that before Hitler came into power "German Jewry, which was supposed to control the Weimar Republic, was an oppressed, baited, and, to a large extent, ruined body. Victorious National Socialism had only to complete the work". Of the Ministers the future Führer wrote, "If fate temporarily throws power into the laps of such nonentities, they not only incessantly insult and blackguard the past, but also by every possible means seek to throttle public opinion". In other countries, such as Russia, Poland, Austria, Rumania and Cezchoslovakia, hatred of the Jews sometimes manifested itself in scenes of violence, but was never fostered and organized in recent times in the thorough-going manner of the German Government as part and parcel of State policy. When troubles arose, which was often, they were put down to the machinations of the Bolsheviks or the Jews, or both.

Once again irony flecks the landscape. Israel has always prided itself as a chosen people; the Germans have also come to believe that they are also marked out for divine favour, even though their deity be not Jehovah but Odin or Thor. "We want to go after death to Valhalla, where we can continue our struggle, and not to a Christian Paradise

where only the boring life of idlers awaits us," Dr. Robert Ley, leader of the German Labour Front, assured his followers, though it is open to doubt that with a surfeit of war in this world all members of the successor of the suppressed Trade Unions wished to continue it in eternity. The epileptic Julius Streicher, expelled from his profession of schoolmaster, enforced with almost incredible cruelty the official fiat that from henceforward "and for ever" the participation of Jews in the political or social affairs of the people of the Reich was prohibited.

There is no greater authority on human genetics than Dr. Gunnar Dahlberg, who states most emphatically that the assumption that pure races exist is "purely a hypothesis which has little scientific basis". What is perhaps even more important, he adds that so far as Europe is concerned "migration or interbreeding across the frontiers of nations has been so great that there is scarcely any reason to imagine that essential differences occur". With regard to inherited traits, Dr. Dahlberg states that there is absolutely no reason for maintaining that Jews represent a special type.

## CHAPTER IX

# AMERICA'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE SUBJECT

THE benevolent neutrality of the United States during the opening phase of the Second World War and her subsequent joining in the conflict as an ally led to a revival of interest in her history. Twenty years before a great deal had been said and written suggesting that there would be a growing sympathy between the two great English-speaking peoples. Unhappily Great Britain was disillusioned by the failure of the United States to identify herself with the League of Nations which President Woodrow Wilson had done so much to bring into being.

The western republic, listening to the interminable wrangles that disturbed Europe, and feeling that she had been badly let down by the non-payment of her "hired money" by various countries, thought it wise to let them stew in their own unsavoury broth. Now and again she extended a helping hand, and by such means as the Dawes Plan, the Young Plan and the Kellogg-Briand Pact sought to pull the struggling nations out of the morass into which they had fallen. We know the worth of these efforts now. Once again the United States has had to exert her armed strength in a conflict in which she is involved to a far greater extent than in the previous contest. Then Japan was fighting on the side of the Allies, and the Pacific was an asset; now the Land of the Rising Sun is an enemy and the world's largest ocean is a liability.

British historians had already contributed two outstanding works that helped to an appreciation of what the United States had achieved and her position in the world. These were Bryce's *American Commonwealth* and Sir George Otto Trevelyan's *History of the American Revolution*, the former published in three volumes in 1888, and the latter, also as a trinity, in 1905. A new edition of *The American*

*Commonwealth*, completely revised and with additional chapters, was brought out in 1910. In the interim the Spanish-American War had been fought and won, and it appeared that the United States was about to become an imperialist Power. Bryce felt that the negro element would remain "unabsorbed and unabsorbable" and sensed difficulties as a consequence of the continued influx of immigrants from Europe, many of whom were of a lower type than previous entrants.

In 1907 Bryce became Ambassador to the United States, an office which his predecessor, Sir Mortimer Durand, regarded as the most important of all diplomatic posts. Bryce held this position for six years, retiring with the conviction that "No two peoples in the world are so called upon, one might say so appointed, by Providence, to be friends to one another". His *Modern Democracies*, nine chapters of which are devoted to the United States, saw the light when the retired diplomat was eighty-three years of age; he had produced his first work, *The Holy Roman Empire*, when only twenty-four. Pointing out that democracy had often been wasteful, and had neither produced general contentment nor diminished class selfishness, he yet felt that "it has, taken all in all, given better practical results than either the Rule of One Man or the Rule of a Class, for it has at least extinguished many of the evils by which they were defaced". A fearless critic, he discerned future wars as a result of the various treaties of 1919-20, and bluntly suggested that not only had the negotiators at Versailles differed in their principles and ideas, but some of them did not seem to have believed in the principles they professed. One of the problems which puzzled this great historian was why the young people of Great Britain showed less zeal for knowledge than those of many other nations, "and certainly less than the Chinese". Unable to answer the question, he suspected an undue addiction to sport as a contributing factor.

Bryce's outspokenness was always evident. Dr. Walter Hines Page, American Ambassador to the Court of St. James's from 1913 to 1918, when he returned home a dying



man, once remarked that for a quarter of a century every lad in almost every school in the United States had been brought up on *The American Commonwealth*. He instanced the case of an elderly gentleman and a young man who fell into a controversy during a journey about the government of the United States. "I know I am right, and I can prove it: I quote from Bryce," avowed the junior. Whereupon the other answered, "I am Bryce". The book is not easy reading.

Bryce faced unpleasant truths fairly and squarely, giving judgment to the best of his knowledge and ability. He denounced Mr. Joseph Chamberlain's policy in South Africa, and the conduct of the war that ensued. Liberal and democratic, he admitted that under any political constitution that had ever been devised the many were led by the few. Having scaled the 15,000 ft. of Mount Ararat and many another towering peak, Bryce was not afraid to scale spiritual heights. It was said of him that no judge who ever sat upon the literary bench held the moral standard higher. A philosopher not greatly addicted to the making of epigrams, he says in *Modern Democracy*, "without Faith nothing is accomplished, and Hope is the mainspring of Faith". I will couple with this a final quotation that has a very definite bearing on the need for an appreciation of history on the part of the ordinary man and woman. The occasion was in 1921, when he gave a series of lectures at the Institute of Politics in Williams College, Mass., U.S.A., on international relations:

"You may say, 'What can private citizens do?' Well, the State is made up of private citizens, and such as they are such will the State be. Each of us as individuals can do little, but many animated by the same feeling and belief can do much. What is Democracy for except to represent and express the convictions and wishes of the people? The citizens of democracy can do everything if they express their united will. The raindrops that fall from the clouds unite to form a tiny rill, and meeting other rills, it becomes a rivulet, and the rivulet grows into a brook and the brooks, as they join into one another, swell into a river that sweeps in its

resistless course downwards into the sea. Each of us is only a drop, but together we make up the volume of public opinion which determines the character and action of the State. What all the nations now need is a public opinion which shall in every nation give more constant thought and keener attention to international policy and lift it to a higher plane. The peoples can do this in every country if the best citizens give them the lead."

A movement to establish a Chair of American History at University College, London, was started in New York in the last month of 1926. It was hoped to raise a capital sum of £30,000, the income from which was to provide the Professor's salary and purchase and maintain a library. By January, 1930, a matter of £46,000 had been secured, and the chair was duly filled. On presiding at the first lecture given by Prof. H. Hale Bellot, General C. G. Dawes, the American Ambassador, drew attention to the fact that America had 120,000,000 people, 60 per cent of whom were of British descent, or at least 20,000,000 to 30,000,000 more people of British descent than lived in the British Isles. Some ten years later, in the middle of June, 1941, a leading article in *The Times* complained that notwithstanding the substantial facilities offered in several British universities "it remains true that American history is still an undiscovered country, not only to the British people as a whole, but to many even of those who call themselves educated. . . . The twentieth century has seen the birth of a conception of American world leadership, and may well see its fruition. But that conception, if it is realized, will take forms rooted in the American past, and largely unfamiliar to the Eastern hemisphere. In every sense a world in which American leadership is effective will be a new world. That is one of the many reasons why the study of American history, American institutions, and above all American traditions is of prime importance to the rising generation in this country".

Acknowledging that children on this side of the Atlantic were less well-informed about American history, life and achievements than were their contemporaries in the United

States about British affairs, the Board of Education arranged courses on the past and present of the western republic for teachers in all types of schools. When inaugurating one of the courses, Mr. J. G. Winant, the American Ambassador, who began life as a teacher of American history at a secondary school, took occasion to point out that after the First World War "we tried to rewrite our history and be a little more objective about it all, because we realized we had been allies and stood as friends. I believe that has helped and brought about a newer understanding". The Board of Education began the publication of a series of pamphlets designed to help teachers. Copies were sent to some 30,000 schools in England and Wales.

Previous to the outbreak of the Second World War the Society<sup>1</sup> for Research in Education had arranged for lectures on the United States in schools of various types in London and the provinces, with excellent results. Mr. J. Howard Whitehouse reported that hundreds of points were raised, and many questions "led to most valuable discussions, as, for instance, one from a boy who asked how it was possible for a country containing so many States, composed of people of many nationalities, to avoid the necessity of having individual State armies as in Europe. The discussion arising enabled the audience to realize that the United States offered a most splendid example of the art of living together. The evils of a second Europe, with its armies and rivalries, barriers and wars, had been avoided".

Mr. R. A. Butler, then President of the Board of Education, opening the second of the courses, which was held at Oxford, confessed that experience at the Foreign Office had taught him that people needed to acquire a thorough knowledge of other nations. Such knowledge imparted in the schools would form one of the most powerful forces to make the English-speaking peoples a joint influence for good on world affairs in the future. On a later occasion, Mr. Butler said that he would like to see meetings all over the country telling the grown-up as much as was being told to the children. Had a modicum of the information for which the President pleaded so eloquently been in the possession of

those who took part in the winding-up of the First World War, they would have been aware that President Woodrow Wilson could not constitutionally commit the United States to accept the Treaty of Versailles.

This habit of putting off until the eleventh hour calls for no comment other than to remark that this national characteristic is not an asset. A man who has never suffered loss from fire may be forgiven if he omits to place extinguishers in his house, but he surely displays lamentable and even wilful neglect if, having had his home badly damaged a first time, he omits to take precautions against a second outbreak. Human nature is ever inclined to take the line of least resistance; it does not wish to be bothered. Yet it would seem that eternal vigilance can alone avail. Friendships which are not maintained cease to be such. The correspondent who fails to write is no longer a correspondent. The citizen who does not take an intelligent interest in affairs is unworthy of the name, though he is often enough a relentless arm-chair critic.

Prof. R. McElroy, Harmsworth Professor of American History at Oxford, undoubtedly voiced the feeling of many when he said that when the people of one nation had full knowledge of the people of another nation they realized that virtue was not the monopoly of any one nation. In his opinion the study of history was the best means of making popular verdicts right. There is an old saying that "The voice of the people is the voice of God". While not agreeing that this was always so, Prof. McElroy said that all the great laws and great reforms in United States history had been the result of popular verdicts.

Of the formidable and increasing army of American historians, two occupied the chief office in the State. They were makers of history as well as writers of it. President Theodore Roosevelt was called by a friend "a man of letters in love with life". Certainly no student ever led the strenuous life which he advocated with greater zest, not only in the study but in the wider world. Rancher, rough rider, explorer, statesman, thinker, zoologist, this dynamic personality was all of these things and more. "Mere beating

the air," he says in one of his essays, "mere visionary adherence to a nebulous and possibly highly undesirable ideal, is utterly worthless. The cloistered virtue which timidly shrinks from all contact with the rough world of actual life, and the uneasy, self-conscious vanity which misnames itself virtue, and which declines to co-operate with whatever does not adapt itself to its own fantastic standard, are rather worse than valueless, because they tend to rob the forces of good elements on which they ought to be able to count in the ceaseless contest with the forces of evil."

One of Roosevelt's most notable contributions to historical literature was *The Naval Operations of the War between Great Britain and the United States, 1812-1815*, which although published in 1882 has not been superseded. He started to work on it before he was twenty-three. Intensely interested in all that concerned the sea, as was his namesake the 31st President, he also collaborated with W. Laird Clowes in *The History of the Royal Navy of England. The Winning of the West*, in four volumes, remains a standard work, and he also wrote biographies of the American statesmen Thomas Hart Benton and Gouverneur Morris, in addition to a life of Cromwell.

Of outstanding importance was his Romanes Lecture on Biological analogies in History, delivered at Oxford in 1910. Roosevelt's theme was that there was a certain similarity between what had happened to various forms of animal life and what he termed the great artificial civilizations since the building of cities in Egypt and Mesopotamia. Prefacing his address by remarking that there was, of course, no exact parallelism between the birth, growth and death of species in the animal world and similar events in the world of man, yet there were strange analogies, perhaps homologies. He pointed out that when a biologist speaks of a new species he thinks of a form of life that is a deviation from the ancestral type, and that the extinction of a species may be either a complete dying out or the production of something different by changes in succeeding generations. The titanotheres, which completely disappeared, was an instance



of the one; the little eohippus, which left descendants that developed into the horse, of the other. There was analogy between these facts and certain facts in the development of societies. Roosevelt also instanced that when an animal becomes highly specialized and triumphs over allied rivals and enemies, in many cases the specialization goes too far, and from some unknown cause the species disappears. Changes in the climate, and therefore in vegetation, might lead to the destruction of a group of herbivores. Lower forms of life prey on the higher forms. In human history a new form may result from the specialization of a long-existing and hitherto slow-changing form, as when a barbaric race, from a variety of causes, develops a more complex civilization.

"This is what occurred," said Roosevelt, "in western Europe during the centuries of the Teutonic, and, later, the Scandinavian ethnic overflows from the north. All the modern countries of western Europe are descended from the States created by these northern invaders. When first created they would be called 'new' or 'young' States in the sense that part or all of the people composing them were descended from races that hitherto had not been civilized, and that therefore, for the first time, entered on the career of civilized communities." When the new form is a splitting off from a long-established or specialized nation as in America from Portugal, Spain and England, there are changes in detail, but the civilization is of the same European type.

As regards the death of a civilization, Roosevelt cited the case of the city-builders of Babylon and Nineveh. Doubtless certain influences remain, though so changed and hidden as to be unrecognizable. This complete disappearance, in his opinion, was not analogous to the old Roman Empire, and he held it probable that the present Italian type finds its ancestral type in the ancient Latin. The Roman culture forced on France and Spain "has been tenaciously retained by them . . . as the basis on which their civilizations have been built", and extended through them to South America. The primary cause of the fall of Rome was that "the average

citizen had lost the fighting edge"; much the same applied to Holland, but both Italy and Holland "teach us that races that fall may rise again".

The supremacy of the white race was but a thing of yesterday. "More than a century went by after the voyages of Columbus before the mastery of war began to pass from the Asiatic to the European," after which the advance continued over much of the world. The first exception of consequence was the rise of Japan, which had "assimilated with curious completeness most of the characteristics that have given power and leadership to the West". Roosevelt held that the laws of morality which should govern individuals in their common dealings should be as binding on nations, and urged that the highest duty of the most advanced peoples was to be in "such a state of readiness as to forbid to any barbarism or despotism the hope of arresting the progress of the world by striking down the nations that lead in that progress". Four years later the flames of war flickered round the world.

Two epigrams coined by President Woodrow Wilson remain fresh in the minds of most people; they have been repeated again and again, sometimes with the suggestion of a sneer, since they were uttered. The first is his declaration of May 10, 1915: "There is such a thing as a man being too proud to fight. There is such a thing as a nation being so right that it does not need to convince others by force that it is right." The other occurs in his message to Congress on April 2, 1917: "The world must be made safe for democracy. Its peace must be planted upon the tested foundations of political liberty."

Woodrow Wilson was particularly interested in political philosophy, and gave great attention to the study of the English parliamentary system. His addresses and literary style were based on his frequent reading of Demosthenes, the Athenian orator and statesman, regarded by some as a fervent patriot and by others as little more than a windy demagogue. Other favourite sources of inspiration were Edmund Burke and Walter Bagehot. Wilson's treatise on *Congressional Government*, published in 1885, became a

standard work, and led to his appointment as a lecturer on history and political science at Bryn Mawr College. *Division and Reunion* dealt with the American Civil War. The opening theme in his *An Old Master, and other Political Essays* is Adam Smith, the author of *The Wealth of Nations*. Other volumes included his greatest work, *A History of the American People*, and not unfittingly in the light of after events, *George Washington*, in which the social and domestic qualities of the first President of the United States received more adequate attention than had been given in many previous biographies of him.

Iron did not enter into Woodrow Wilson's soul as a result of his close study of men and events. Any idealism that may have been part of his mental inheritance was stimulated by his researches. In 1913 he entered his first term of office at the White House with a belief, not in the perfectibility of the species but that man could achieve much more than he had done. He saw a vista of magnificent opportunities. "We are learning again," he said, "that the service of humanity is the business of mankind, and that the business of mankind must be set forward by the government which mankind sets up in order that justice may be done and not forgotten, and all the world is striving now as never before after the conception of the elevation of humanity. . . . Men must look to it that they do unto others as they would have others do unto them. This used to be and has long been the one subject for the discourse of Christian ministers, but it has now come to be part of the bounden duties of Ministers of States."

The conflict that began in 1914 was not heralded by preliminary warnings such as characterized its successor. When the last shot was fired the idealist sought to build a new world out of the ruins left by the most terrible devastation then known. That must surely count for righteousness and make certain of a place in the annals of time for the historian turned statesman. Like Moses, he viewed the Promised Land, but was not allowed to enter it. There was murmuring in the tents of his people. The League of Nations, which Wilson sincerely believed would turn swords into pruning

hooks and cannon into tractors, and make the world fit for all to live in, was rejected by them. It broke his heart.

Probably one of the reasons why Woodrow Wilson failed was because the fierce light of the Vision Splendid blinded him to the cold, hard, rude facts of life as it really is.

"The war to end war" was over, and in their passionate desire for peace ordinary folk believed that "the bloody wild beast in man" had been tamed. No longer would the smoke of battle cloud roseate dawns or golden sunsets. *Homo sapiens* would prove worthy of the name. At the Peace Conference the President found himself a lonely Crusader among a party of Saracens. He made the error that seems to be the common pitfall of self-reliant men of placing only a kind of grudging half-confidence in others. He was apparently willing to trust the crowd, but he was uncertain and suspicious of the individual. Woodrow Wilson was too self-centred, and this led him to make the supreme mistake of believing that his own political party was the only one that had ever drawn water from the well of truth. He forgot History, the appendix to the Bible he knew so well. No representative of the Republicans was asked to Paris. The American people love fair play, and they showed their displeasure in no uncertain way. The League of Nations was regarded as a Jonah, and flung overboard from the Ship of State.

Woodrow Wilson had superb pluck. When he made up his mind to tour the United States so that he might defend the League, the darling of his heart, he was warned by his doctor that he was taking a grave physical risk. Long and arduous labours had already undermined his strength; he had aged before his time. Wilson refused to listen, or rather to take advice. He counted the cost, and was prepared to stake his all. "If I lose my life," he said, "the price is worth paying." Destiny was not long in presenting the bill. Paralysis was the price.

Small wonder that the shattered man, only a month or two before he breathed his last in 1924, used the lash of the taskmaster in a final effort to persuade the great people across the Atlantic to rend their hearts. He sent his message

by radio. This is what the sound waves carried across the broad spaces: "The stimulating memories of the happy times of triumph are forever embittered for us by the shameful fact that, when the victory was won, we turned our backs upon our associates and refused to bear any appreciable part in the administration of peace, or in the firm and permanent establishment of the results of the war, and withdrew into sullen and silent selfish isolation."

It is no part of history to dream of might-have-beens. The Valley of Regret is a depressing and stagnating place in which to sojourn, let alone to dwell. The wheel has turned full circle; once again the United States is fighting by the side of Great Britain, and once again, as we fondly hope, she will take her place at another and a greater Peace Conference. Then will be her opportunity to pay homage to the work and worth of Woodrow Wilson, historian, statesman and man of vision.

A volume would be required to do justice to the many notable contributions made to the study of history by Americans. One or two outstanding names can alone be mentioned. Though some of their findings and facts have not always proved faultless in the light of recent discoveries, as was to be expected, the works of Bancroft, Parkman, Motley, Prescott and others who lived before the era of intensified and often pernickety research have that enduring quality which entitles them to be regarded as classics in their own particular spheres. Classics has taken on a meaning closely associated with literary work that is ponderous and heavy; in this case the word is in the sense of something worthy.

Edward Everett Hale, who assuredly knew a good book when he read it, defending the charge made against George Bancroft that he did not handle with care the original authorities, promptly answered that there was "really no foundation but that he does not like to be dull, as some men do". The author of *The History of the United States from the Discovery of the Continent* served for a time as Minister to England, where he frequently met Macaulay and Hallam. He found the general poverty in England "appalling",



and the state of Ireland "dreadful". Writing in 1847 he says, "The condition of this country is sad beyond measure in all that relates to the labouring classes. Those classes are excessively numerous, and the employer must either employ six to do the work of three or support three in total idleness as paupers. Ours is the country of hope, this of despondency".

Believing that no science had been reached, no thought discovered which had not from all time existed potentially in every human mind, Bancroft held that the progress of man "consists in this, that he himself arrives at the perception of truth. The Divine mind, which is its source, left it to be discovered, appropriated and developed by finite creatures". The movement of the human mind, taken collectively, is always toward something better. The different peoples are component parts of the commonwealth of mankind that will one day be pieced together. Everything tends to that consummation. The human mind tends not only towards unity but universality.

"Since the progress of the race appears to be the great purpose of Providence, it becomes us all to venerate the future. . . . We are not to be disheartened that the intimate connection of humanity renders it impossible for any one portion of the civilized world to be much in advance of all the rest; nor are we to grieve because an unalterable condition of perfection can never be attained. Everything is in movement, and for the better, except only the fixed eternal law by which the necessity of change is established; or rather except only God, who includes in himself all being, all truth, and all love. The subject of man's thoughts remains the same, but the sum of his acquisitions ever grows with time; so that his last system of philosophy is the best, for it includes every one that went before. The last political state of the world, likewise, is ever more excellent than the old, for it presents in activity the entire inheritance of truth, fructified by the living mind of a more enlightened generation."

Such was the creed of an eminent historian in the middle of the nineteenth century as recited by Bancroft in 1854.

Since then belief in virtually automatic progress has undergone considerable change. The urge towards betterment may be inherent in man, but a general fixity of purpose as to how it is to be accomplished has certainly not been achieved. It is well to bear in mind that in the fifty years previous to Bancroft's address man, who may have spent thousands of years at the task of how to give a cutting edge to a flint, had witnessed the introduction of the steam railway, the suspension bridge, the submarine cable, the iron ship, the sewing machine, anaesthesia in surgical operations and much else. The inventive faculty, the mechanical side of progress, had developed with amazing energy, and perhaps presented to the world a false standard of values.

John Lothrop Motley also served for a brief period as United States Minister in England. A further link connects him with Bancroft in so far as he went to the Round Hill School at Northampton, Mass., when Bancroft shared the joint management of that Institution. An incident suggestive of Darwin and Wallace when each discovered that the other was working on the theory of natural selection and honourably discharged it by making a joint report to the Linnean Society brought Prescott and Motley together.

William Hickling Prescott's *Ferdinand and Isabella*, *The Conquest of Mexico* and *The Conquest of Peru* had met with brilliant success. Motley, unaware that his elder contemporary contemplated a history of Philip II, had made up his mind to write on Philip's dealings with Holland which meant that he would necessarily cover part of the same ground. So far his literary work had been essays on Peter the Great, Balzac and the Polity of the Puritans, but the book he was planning had so absorbed his interest that when he heard of Prescott's intention he felt that there was nothing to be done but to abandon his cherished dream and probably authorship as well. Taking the bull by the horns he decided to talk over the matter with Prescott, whom he knew slightly. "He assured me," Motley afterwards told his friend, "that he had not the slightest objection to my plan that he wished me every success, and that if there were any

books in his library bearing on my subject that I liked to use, they were entirely at my service."

This fine gesture on the part of a scholar and a gentleman was followed by a handsome tribute when Motley's *Rise of the Dutch Republic* was published in 1856. "Everywhere," wrote Prescott, "you seem to have gone into the subject with a scholar-like thoroughness of research, furnishing me on my own beaten track with a quantity of new facts and views, which I was not aware it could present to the reader. . . . Your descriptions are everywhere graphic and picturesque. One familiar with your romances"—he had written two novels, *Morton's Hope* and *Merry Mount*, both failures—"will not be surprised at your powers in this way. But yet, after all, the style for history is as different from what is required for romance as that of a great historical picture is from a scene-painting in a theatre. You prove that you possess both. Your portraiture of character is vigorous and animated, full of characteristic touches, from a pencil that is dipped in the colours of the old masters."

Motley found living and working ten hours a day amongst the archives of Dresden, The Hague and Brussels refreshing after "the noisy, spluttering politics" that had been his lot as a member of the Massachusetts House of Representatives. Following the brilliant success of *The Rise of the Dutch Republic*, Motley continued it with *The United Netherlands* and *The Life and Death of John Barneveld*. Although he had "suddenly fallen into old age as into a pit", he continued to "live much among the dead men", and tackled the considerable correspondence of the statesman "who had the ill luck to be decapitated, as you remember, two centuries and a half ago. If they had cut his head off on account of his abominable handwriting, no creature would have murmured at the decree who ever tried to read his infinite mass of manuscripts." This humorous cheerfulness, so evident in Motley's entertaining letters, is to be found in his books, which for the most part rollick along so that the reader hesitates to stop perusal however late the hour.

He is apt at symbolism and analogy. For instance, in the *Dutch Republic*: "As across the bright plains of Sicily

when the sun is rising, the vast pyramidal shadow of Mount Etna is definitely and visibly projected—the phantom of that ever-present enemy which holds fire and devastation in its bosom—so in the morning hour of Philip's reign the shadow of the Inquisition was cast from afar across those warm and smiling provinces, a spectre menacing fiercer flames and wider desolation than those which mere physical agencies could ever compass." So striking a simile makes a vivid impression on the mind of the reader, as the sight of the shadow of the volcano had impressed itself on the memory of the writer as a young man.

That Motley showed a certain amount of bias is no cause for surprise. In *The Rise of the Dutch Republic* the conflict between despotism and liberty got a grip of him, as it might reasonably do of any American, or any other sane being, for that matter. Tyranny is the unforgivable sin of humanity and the fanatical brooder in the Escorial sought to fetter Europe and his possessions across the western waters with his own gloomy version of Christianity. Philip would "compel them to come in"—the excuse of the Inquisition. Motley's soul burned with indignation; the flames tipped his pen. Ought the historian to legislate, to point a moral? If he cannot reach a decision, if he fails to differentiate between what he believes to be right and wrong, his work is robbed of much of its worth. He must be true to himself. This also applies with equal force to the reader. He need not accept conclusions if he does not agree with them. Denied the critical apparatus at the disposal of the writer, the reader can dip the litmus paper of his own reason into the potion and note the result. Does the blue turn red with acid, the red go blue with alkali? The difficulty of overcoming his own bias will not be the least of the peruser's difficulties, but it is worth attempting. Man is a political animal. He has got to think on these things, and not only to think but to act, unless he is to be for ever fighting his own species, which cannot be other than mere foolishness.

"Man," in the opinion of Dr. L. P. Jacks, "while made for life in Society, was not made for life in such political states as now exist . . . he must either find some other form of

association or lose his humanity under their pressure." He points out in *The Confessions of an Octogenarian* that Herbert Spencer sounded the alarm in 1884 in *Man versus the State*, "which, unheeded at the time, is now being fulfilled in the bloody suicide of sovereign States".

Born at Dorchester, Mass., U.S.A., Motley died near Dorchester, England, in 1877. On his gravestone is the text, "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all."

Both Prescott and Francis Parkman are notable instances of indomitable pluck and perseverance in the face of almost insurmountable obstacles. Prescott lost the sight of one eye and was almost totally blind in the other and had to use a writing frame to enable him to do his work. He was almost in despair when he recollected reading Johnson's account of how Milton was forced to abandon his project of writing a History of England because his blindness prevented him from referring to authorities. "This remark piqued me to make the attempt," said Prescott, with what result we know. Parkman could see, but had very weak eyes, and a frail constitution, and, like Prescott, was compelled to rely on readers and copyists. What this meant can only be faintly imagined by those who, gifted with good sight, have indulged in historical research, with its constant reference to document and authorities and the eternal question, "Where did I come across that?" Despite difficulties, Parkman persevered and although at times only able to write half a dozen lines a day, completed between 1848 and 1851 *The Conspiracy of Pontiac*. He then concentrated on *France and England in the New World*, a noble work on the long struggle between France and Great Britain for empire, the first volume of which reached the public in 1865 and the last in 1892, the year before he died. Parkman's judgments on the expulsion of the Arcadians from the territory now known as Nova Scotia by Governor Charles Laurence in 1755 was severely criticised by M. Jusserand, French Ambassador in Washington, on the occasion of the Parkman centenary celebrated in Canada in 1923, although he acknowledged gratitude for the historian's general attitude towards the French. One example of his insatiable hunger for first hand sources may



be cited. Montcalm had asked that certain of his letters should be destroyed. Parkman believed that the instruction had not been carried out, and by various means searched patiently for fifteen years, when the correspondence was discovered in a private collection of manuscripts.

Although James Henry Breasted conducted many archaeological expeditions in Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Irak, Persia and Anatolia, he found time to write a goodly number of volumes, including *Ancient Records of Egypt*, *A History of the Ancient Egyptians*, *The Development of Religion and Thought in Ancient Egypt*, and *A Survey of the Modern World*. He also collaborated with James Harvey Robinson in the production of *The History of Europe, Ancient and Medieval*. Breasted, who was anti-stodge, called history the Human Adventure, which is as simple a definition as any yet coined, and believed most emphatically in the "unconquerable buoyancy of the human spirit". He wrote, with Prof. J. H. Robinson, Part I of *Outlines of European History*; Part II was the work of Robinson and Prof. Charles A. Beard, his colleague at Columbia University. Past conditions and institutions were accentuated rather than events. It was largely a condensation and revision of the authors' larger work, *The Development of Modern Europe*, in which the aim was to enable the reader to catch up with his own times; to read intelligently the foreign news in the morning paper. Robinson's philosophy is best summed-up in seven clear-cut sentences in *The New History*, in which he pleaded for a wider outlook and a more edifying conception of the scope and intent of the study, and complained that historians skipped lightly from one commotion to another as though there were no lucid intervals.

"Even those of us," he writes, "who have little taste for mysticism have to recognize a mysterious unconscious impulse which appears to be a concomitant of natural order. It would seem as if this impulse has always been unsettling the existing conditions and pushing forward, groping after something more elaborate and intricate than what already existed. This vital impulse, *élan vital*, as Bergson calls it, represents the inherent radicalism of nature herself. This

power that makes for experimental readjustment—for *adventure* in the broadest sense of the term—is no longer a conception confined to poets and dreamers, but must be reckoned with by the most exacting historian and the hardest-headed man of science. We are only just coming to realize that we can co-operate with and direct this innate force of change which has so long been silently operating, in spite of the respectable lethargy, indifference, and even protests of man himself, the most educable of all its creatures. At last, perhaps, the long-disputed sin against the Holy Ghost has been found; it may be the refusal to co-operate with the vital principle of betterment. History would seem, in short, to condemn the principle of conservatism as a hopeless and wicked anachronism."

In his essay, *The Mind in the Making*, Robinson asserts that "Most human progress has been a mere 'muddling through'," and cites as an example the First World War, with its millions of casualties, its continued disorder and bewilderment. "Yet men," he adds, writing in 1921, "seem blindly driven to defend and perpetuate the conditions which produced the last disaster." His prophecy proved only too true.

There is a school of thought which holds that the multiplying distresses of the world are mainly attributable to the Industrial Revolution; that when man forsook the land and craftsmanship for the town and the machine he lost something that he has never been able to regain. "Imposition from without as opposed to creation from within," to quote Mr. H. J. Massingham. "True," he adds, "the craftsman was not progressive; generation by generation he created anew along the great line of tradition. Yet I asked myself whether this was not nearer to eternity and to nature both than is the way of progressing into the void. The whole idea of progress as we interpret it now, is a kind of slavery to the strip-film notion of Time."

## CHAPTER X

### THE RETURN TO SANITY

It seems clear that if we are to make yet another attempt to regain sanity we must start by knowing much more about the world and its peoples than we do at present. Some individuals prefer to study in solitude, but others find that problems are best threshed out in the company of congenial companions. During what the Americans term World War I, I was honoured by being asked to address what was called a Conversation Class. I did so on several occasions, the subjects being social topics. I spoke my little piece, and then what I had said was debated. At first the attendance was small, but when it was noised abroad that anybody could say what they liked without fear or favour, the subject of each week's meeting became a leading topic of the parish for several days. All sorts and conditions of men put in an appearance, and I can assure you that the standard of intelligence was anything but low. The class taught me a great deal; I never realised before how many different points of view there might be, and all worthy of consideration.

Similar groups for the discussion of history, past, present and in the making, might well be started by a few enthusiasts in every city, town, village and hamlet. A beginning could be made by taking a standard history and following it chapter by chapter, agreeing with this, disagreeing with that, but always stating a reason. The majority of us love an argument, and most books afford plenty of opportunity for controversy. If the chapter or section to be dealt with be cited at a meeting before it is studied and debated, the really interested will have a chance to think over the matter and perhaps make a reference or two to other authorities should a public library or other sources be available. Above all let the proceedings be conducted in a free-and-easy manner, so that Old Bill may not be deprived of the consolation of his briar and Young Harry of his cigarette.

On occasion, and by way of a change, one might proceed from the general to the particular: the story of familiar surroundings. Every acre in the kingdom has something to tell. The loneliest spot will reveal a romance. Let me give you a case in point. Years ago, when wandering about Norfolk as a boy, I came across a ruined windmill. There it stood, gaunt and unattractive, a blot on the landscape, forsaken by all other than a few cattle which were scratching their sides against the brickwork. Approaching nearer, I noticed several fine arches. The mill had been erected in the centre of the cluster. I made a few enquiries, and found that the arches and a few scattered remains were all that was left of the once powerful St. Benet's Abbey. I also discovered that at no remote time the flint of the venerable walls had been used to mend roads.

This being my first essay in practical archaeology, my appetite was whetted. Legend, which is not necessarily a lying jade, says that here Cnut, who styled himself King of England, Norway and part of Sweden, commanded the sea to stop its advance. Poole, in Dorset, also considers itself the site of the miracle that did not happen. Possibly the solution of the mystery is that the Danish word *skiaer*, which might easily be converted into "chair", means a sea embankment. Bosham, in Sussex, has it that Cnut's little daughter fell into the creek there and was drowned, whereupon the monarch ordered earthworks, since called chairs, to be erected.

Cnut is said to have restored the Benedictine monastery on the bank of the river Bure and granted it three manors in 1020, it having been founded in 800 and destroyed by the Danes seven years later. The site of the abbey and a large adjoining landed estate is still part of the endowment of the see of Norwich, and the present bishop enjoys the distinction of being the only prelate of the Church of England who is also an abbot, for the monastery was never dissolved. Richard Taylor dedicated his *Index Monasticus*, in 1821, to Henry, Lord Bishop of Norwich and titular Abbot of Hulme, and in his introduction states that the bishop sat in the Upper House in right of the Barony of Hulme. He

adds that Bishop Montague, of the time of Charles I, subscribed leases as Lord Bishop of Norwich and Lord Abbot of St. Benedict de Holm.

In the days when the Church militant warred with earthly principalities and powers, William of Normandy, it is said, failed to capture St. Benet's, which was defended by a high outer wall enclosing thirty-six acres. A monk named Ethelwait or Elewold, sent on a mission at dead of night, was captured by the enemy and promised the abbacy if he would open the great gate. After an inward struggle he surrendered to temptation. The place was captured, and the betrayer, arrayed in his robes of office, received the homage of the few monks who had survived the fight. "Now," said the commander, "having carried out my promise so far, I have a still higher reward in store for you." Whereupon, with sardonic humour, the abbot of an hour was hanged on the highest place above the gate he had so treacherously opened. It may be well to add for the benefit of those who hold no brief for poetic justice, that according to another version Ethelwait escaped to Denmark.

Satan appears to have been a sore trial to the inmates of St. Benet's. Another young monk grew tired of the strict discipline within the cloisters, and made good his escape to the sinful world without. He seems to have gone to the devil in a very literal sense, or rather the devil came to him, for the patron saint of the monastery caught the Evil One in the act of capturing the monk. Fortunately St. Benet got the better of his antagonist, which is perhaps not altogether surprising seeing that the saint was heavily armed and armoured, whereas the devil could only fight with his claws. In a crude drawing on an old document the foe of mankind is depicted holding his victim in his beak—an unusual appurtenance. It is pleasing to know that the sinner returned to the monastery, and we may hope that he lived happily ever after.

These are just instances of the way material accumulates. Had I pursued my Nosey Parkerings I should doubtless have obtained much more important stuff. I had been brought into almost intimate touch with eleven centuries,



with bishops, priests, kings and invaders, with fancy, fact, battle and murder, and found a living link in 1890 with an abbot of 800, a thousand years earlier. Let it be remembered that it is upon foundations laid by the local historian that the general historian raises his towering structure.

History, like charity, may well begin at home. John Mackintosh wrote his *History of Civilization in Scotland* on used envelopes and odd scraps of paper, his desk the counter of a little shop in Aberdeen. This may afford encouragement to those who have an urge to put their findings on record. George Lipscomb fought poverty while planning his monumental *History and Antiquities of the County of Buckinghamshire*, which remains the standard work on the subject, though the author died in 1846, nearly one hundred years ago. "If democracy," it has been pointed out, "is to be really educated in the history, theory, and practice of affairs, it must receive that education where it works and while it works for a living." It is certainly no good trying to instil knowledge in the years of senility. The Kent Education Committee not only encourages the study of local history but has issued a syllabus on the subject. Similar bodies might well follow so excellent an example. As to cost, it is astonishing how relatively large sums can be raised in places of small population when there is driving force and enthusiasm behind the appeal. Those who contemplate doing anything on the lines suggested will find *A Short Bibliography of Local History*, by Prof. A. Hamilton Thompson, and Dr. J. C. Cox's *How to Write the History of a Parish* of considerable help.

The boys of a Senior Mixed Council School in Bedfordshire, aided by their History teacher, set about the task of compiling a history of the neighbourhood. It took them some three years to collect information on the manorial system, old industries, charities, taxation, field names, distinctive local surnames and so on. The whole was concerted into a narrative of nearly 40,000 words, with illustrations. Within four days of the announcement that it was intended to publish it as a book by subscription at 2s. 6d., sufficient orders had been received to cover the cost.

A certain amount of work will necessarily come under the heading of archaeology, one of the many subjects on which history depends. On material remains, on pots and shards, the historian breathes the breath of life, for were they not fashioned by human fingers and thumbs, the work of man's hands? When written records are non-existent or inadequate, the archaeologist usually comes to the rescue. If he has complicated matters by coming across vast numbers of tablets bearing inscriptions to which the learned have so far failed to provide a key, he has also whetted the appetites of those who revel in word-puzzles of more intricacy than those appearing in today's newspapers. The mind is not impaired by a little stretching.

Dr. R. E. Mortimer Wheeler dug and delved in the fortified hill town of Maiden Castle, near Dorchester, probably the finest earthwork of its kind in Europe, and most certainly in Great Britain. Patience, indomitable perseverance and much study revealed that the first people known to have inhabited the spot, which eventually extended to 108 acres, were pastoral and agricultural folk who lived some 4,000 years ago in a neolithic village. The place was abandoned for a time, but under pressure of immigrants from the continent a town arose, defended by wooden palisades, about the fourth century B.C. The place extended its boundaries, and according to Dr. Wheeler may have held 5,000 or 6,000 persons to the acre. The means of defence were made immensely stronger, perhaps the work of some alien "totalitarian ruler of genius". With the coming of the Romans the men, women and children vacated Maiden Castle for the city which the conquering legions built on the site of the present county town of Dorset. "Our modern cities," says the historian who did so much to elucidate the mystery of the great mound, "London, Birmingham, Liverpool and the rest are, in a real sense, the direct heirs of Maiden Castle and its fellows."

It is to be hoped that the pageants which flourished in the first decade of the present century will be revived; at the moment the only link with them is a very watered-down Lord Mayor's Show. They did much to awaken interest in

outstanding chapters of the nation's story. Some, as at Sherborne, Warwick, St. Albans, Romsey, Bury St. Edmunds and Arundel were magnificently mounted and produced by masters of the art. Others, with less opportunity, were necessarily carried out on a less ambitious scale.

In this connection may be mentioned *The Last Days of St. Benet's Abbey*, written by Mr. Louis N. Parker, and performed in the small village of Potter Heigham, within a few miles of the ruins referred to on an earlier page. It attracted so much attention that five performances had to be given, the proceeds being devoted to the very worthy object of restoring the old thatched parish church, dating from 1200 or earlier. The men of Hildenborough, in Kent, gunpowder makers, cricket-ball fashioners, saddlers, blacksmiths and farm workers for the most part, gave of their leisure to picture the deep meaning of "Sanctuary" to a fugitive from justice, the life of the monastery at Minster, and the toilsome pilgrimage to Becket's shrine at Canterbury. Villagers of the twentieth century snatched back the fifteenth century for a few brief hours.

Can any of those who witnessed the Romsey Pageant fail to recollect the mimic body of William Rufus covered by a shroud of bracken carried on a New Forest cart as it bumped along the very lane used in 1100, the horse led by a descendant of the charcoal burners who lent a hand in the original procession? That kind of memory sticks.

It is doubtful whether there is a more attractive means than the pageant of resurrecting the past and making ordinary folk appreciate something of their rich inheritance. It took a long time, many lives and a great expenditure of treasure to gain the freedom we enjoyed before the Second World War; a freedom fettered at the time of writing by a privileged bureaucracy, the loosening of whose tightly-gripped hands may entail a grim and protracted struggle before they release their beloved and befogging Regulations and Orders. Yet we are assured on the word of Mr. Churchill that "The rights and liberties of Englishmen are older and more sacred than Parliament itself".

Those who look forward as well as backward will not despair of the revival of the pageant. They know something of the philosophy of life which suggests that heaviness may endure for a night, or many nights, but joy cometh in the morning. Here is the opinion of an American, Miss Lotta A. Clark, on the matter: "A pageant means doing one's local history. Each individual helps to give all the others a great community lesson. The whole town is conscious of itself, of its traditions and its history. These are the topics of conversation in the family, in the bus, and in gatherings of all kinds. Neighbours chaff each other about their parts in the pageant; parents and children rehearse and plan together; and teachers discuss the episodes in their class-rooms. . . . Best of all, old and young of all classes and creeds find here a common field of enthusiastic interest, and such fields of common interest are growing more rare. It gives the elders much food for thought and reflection which they enjoy thoroughly, while it also gives the youngsters plenty of chance for action which is so necessary for their pleasure in anything."

The general lack of interest in the British Commonwealth of Nations is something of a mystery. The term appears to have been invented by Field-Marshal (then General) Smuts, who first used it, so far as I have been able to trace, in a speech made on May 31, 1917. Magazines have been started to popularize the subject, and have failed. Is it a case of out of sight out of mind, apathy or sheer disinterestedness? Disinterestedness, that is to say, until some of the component parts of the Commonwealth were torn away almost in the twinkling of an eye.

The patch-work quilt inevitably covered a multitude of sins, but it also hid a number of virtues. Here was a League of Nations that really worked. Visionaries regarded it as internationalism in embryo. The blatant, shouting, flag-waving days of Kipling and imperialism had departed. There was nothing belligerent left. The soldiers scattered about the globe were not sufficient to police many of the places they garrisoned, let alone indulge in predatory practices. So far as the Dominions were concerned they had

become free nations, thanks to the Statute of Westminster. The connecting link with the Motherland was a common kingship. They conducted their own affairs yet did not cast adrift. In the hour of dire peril citizens of these independent States streamed overseas in hundreds of thousands and flung themselves into the fray of their own free will.

We shall do well to foster this friendship by seeking to understand something of the problems of Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Newfoundland and the Irish Free State. Eire alone declared herself neutral in the conflict, and did not lift a finger to help. The Irish are not a forgiving people; they hug to their hearts bitter memories handed down from generation to generation. All the more reason then that we should study to see if there is not a way of overcoming this alienation. The apparently insuperable has been overcome a good many times in man's long march through the ages. The despair of today may become the hope of tomorrow, and the accomplishment of the day after, though the time indicated is not measured by Greenwich. Despair is never quite despair unless we make it so.

Only a few weeks before war broke out in 1939 Sir Charles Granville Gibson, addressing the Federation of Chambers of Commerce of the British Empire at London's Guildhall, said that it was no secret that to a great extent the political outlook of the teaching profession was not in the direction of any particular keenness about the British Empire. He knew that would call for a great deal of criticism, but the fact was there, and we might as well say it if we thought it. Well, we have been taught that circumstances alter cases, and it seems highly probable, in the light of subsequent happenings, that the pedagogues may have enlarged their point of view. Two women who were deemed worthy of being called "educated" by the Earl of Meath wrote to him to settle whether California was in the Empire. A grocer's assistant had offered them fruit grown there, adding that he believed California was British, hence the query.

An impartial examination of the facts will show that Burke was not far wrong in his summing-up of the matter, although he spoke in 1757: "The settlement of our colonies



was never pursued upon any regular plan; but they were formed, grew and flourished as accidents, as the nature of the climate, or the disposition of private men, happened to operate." Empire, Commonwealth, Brotherhood of Nations, call it what you like, but there was never so great a fellowship of diverse races and peoples. At the beginning of the nineteenth century there was no self-governing possession anywhere.

Of late years a kind of inferiority complex developed regarding the Empire, no doubt accentuated by difficulties that arose over India. The suggestion seems to have been entertained that its story was in the main no more than the collected biographies of gangs of brigands, bullies and pirates. By a strange perversion of ethics it was felt that those who sat in darkness should be allowed to remain in sepulchral gloom, and that "outsiders" had no right whatever to interfere with their culture, such as it was. If any readers entertain such notions let him peruse *The Cambridge History of the British Empire*, a substantial and honest effort. Those who despise the work of colonization carried out by the Motherland will do well to remember that today's standard of judgment is not that of earlier times. A lofty humanitarianism cannot be applied with any degree of honesty to periods which had lower ideas and ideals of morality. It was long believed that a black man had no soul, and was therefore not entirely human.

I wonder if these self-same people were numbered among those who objected to Russia becoming our ally, thereby saving us in the nick of time from the possibility of overwhelming defeat, or did they think that we were again "shaking hands with murder"? The Russian masses may be uneducated as we understand education, but in a speech made in 1935 by Voroshiloff to young men who had passed their special reserve examination, he said that culture had become an integral part of national defence, as important as jumping from parachutes or being trained by tens of thousands as airmen and snipers. One of the subjects the Commissar of War mentioned for the making of "the perfect" warrior was history. Bias is an inclination difficult

o overcome. Prof. R. Coupland suggests that English history might far better ignore Julius Cæsar or William the Conqueror than ignore the great figures of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as it too often did in our schools and colleges. In his opinion the development of the idea of Dominion status was one of the most interesting and profitable subjects of study in the whole range of modern history.

The charge has been made that English history has been systematically sacrificed to the demands of patriotism and convention. Patriotism that cannot stomach facts is unworthy of the name. Citizens who stood up against the *blitzkrieg* and went about their business in the ruins of their homes and their accustomed haunts are scarcely likely to turn pale if a literary man hurls a few pebbles. It is precisely because some historians have thought it grossly indecent to reveal the naked truth that the subject is suspect. Let us know where we have erred so that we may profit by our mistakes. Most poisons have antidotes. The world has been lied to and lied about too long. We desecrate the dead by falsehood. Flattery dishonours. Open confession is good for the soul: the national and international soul. Let us have done with cant and humbug. "Our crimes would despair if they were not cherished by our virtues," says Shakespeare.

History has lost its simplicity. It has now so many contributory sources, and impinges on the domains of other sciences to such an extent that it is practically impossible to determine its exact boundaries with any degree of satisfaction. Where does it begin? What does it comprise? Doubtless its origin was story-telling; certainly the first English historians were bards, who detailed actual occurrences, not unmingled with myths and legends, for the edification of court and camp. Obviously it will not cease until the sole remaining human being on this planet draws his last breath, perhaps long after Macaulay's New Zealander has sat on a ruined arch of London Bridge. Its tributaries include such superficially differing sciences as biology, psychology, philology and meteorology; its Gulf Stream is

the study of human life in action, often deep and sometimes unnavigable.

Some teachers continue to limit history to such comparatively small matters as dates and reigns. Periods of time are merely make-believe divisions for purpose of clearness and reference, though they are apt to be hedges that distort the vision and preclude a clear view. Of course one reign may be more or less enlightened than another, one statesman may confer more or fewer benefits on his own country, either individually or by means of a political party, than his predecessors, but always since the period of our earliest known ancestor there has been a previous foundation on which to build.

If we pursue this matter farther we find that it is well-nigh impossible to trace the origin of any given event. Logically its germ was in the brain of the person who first conceived it and gave it practical form. Nelson's name is inextricably associated with the battle of the Nile, but he did not bring it about, although he helped to make it possible, aided by a number of causes with which he had nothing whatever to do. Had there been no Egyptian expedition by the French there could have been no victory in Aboukir Bay; had Napoleon never dreamed of Oriental conquest during the Italian campaign of 1796-97 it is unlikely that he would have set out for the land of the Pharaohs. Perhaps the seed-thought of a long train of actions germinated even before Bonaparte turned soldier of fortune; maybe when he was reading Plutarch or scribbling comments on English history in a garret.

This being so, it stands to reason that until the mind overcomes its present limitations, history can never pose as an exact science, using the term as it is commonly understood. Dr. Nicholas Murray Butler has pointed out that if the American Declaration of Independence can be said to have had a single proximate and moving cause, it was Tom Paine's pamphlet *Common Sense*. Incidentally the case of the Quaker stay-maker, privateersman, exciseman and pamphleteer is an excellent instance of the way history tends to the reversal or toning down of former verdicts.

The bicentenary of the birth of the "rebel" was accorded leader-page articles in British newspapers in 1937, and led to an effort to trace the whereabouts of Paine's bones, which Cobbett had brought from America. The search met with no success.

It is said that history repeats itself. This proverb is not quite so simple as it looks. It poses a complex problem beneath the surface. If I put my finger instead of my pen into the ink-pot I know for certain, provided the receptacle is filled with writing fluid, that it will come out wet and discoloured. Natural laws are at work, and whenever I have made the experiment I have always had the same result. History does not work quite like that. So far as outside, as distinguished from inside, information is available, there was nothing to suggest that because Italy had thrown Austria and Germany overboard and entered the First World War on the side of the Allies in 1915 she would cast aside her allegiance to the Axis in 1940 and join Great Britain and France. Whitehall apparently thought that honeyed words and kindly smiles might effect a conversion; that history would repeat itself. The common man believed otherwise. Basing his supposition on the bitterness that had been aroused by sanctions and the Abyssinian War, he argued that history would certainly repeat itself, but in another way. Italy had waited until 1915 because she wanted to be reasonably certain of being on the winning side; she would prevaricate for a precisely similar reason. She waited until 1940, earning Hitler's gratitude. "From the very beginning of the war," he told the Reichstag, "Italy kept strong units of our enemy occupied. When the Duce considered that the moment had come to take up arms he did so of his own accord. Italy's entry into the war played a part in hastening France's recognition of the fact that further resistance would be comparatively unavailing."

In his *Garibaldi and the Making of Italy*, published in 1911, Dr. G. M. Trevelyan ventured to read the stars. "The power of this great national movement," he writes, "has fortunately been directed only to the security of Italian liberty and not to the oppression of others. . . . There is no

one for the Italians to oppress." They found an opportunity a few months later when the Italo-Turkish War began: the conflict that fructified Mussolini's ambition to turn the Mediterranean into a Roman lake, and made him dream and work and fight for an African empire. When the territory was won the imperial domain was duly recognized by Great Britain, whose sailors, soldiers and airmen afterwards hurled him out of it.

Referring to the first decade of the present century, Mr. W. Somerset Maugham confesses in *The Summing Up* that he could not discover in the eminent British statesmen he met any marked capacity. "I concluded," he adds, "perhaps rashly, that no great degree of intelligence was needed to rule a nation. Since then I have known in various countries a good many politicians who have attained high office. I have continued to be puzzled by what seemed to me the mediocrity of their minds. I have found them ill-informed upon the ordinary affairs of life, and I have not often discovered in them either subtlety of intellect or liveliness of imagination."

"There can be no formulæ in History," says Prof. T. F. Tout, "because no formulæ apply to human affairs." The idea is brought out with even greater emphasis by Dr. James Gairdner, who states that "the domain of History embraces all human knowledge and experience, whether the fact can be classified or not. Thus the immense field of science is still inferior to the immense field of history, but every event in history is not a fact in science. Moreover, when we talk of 'a' science—recognizing that there are many sciences—it really seems absurd to talk of history as 'a' science. One might as well talk of the solar system as a planet". Mr. Theodore Roosevelt, in his Romanes Lecture, admitted that he was willing that History should be treated as a branch of science, but only on condition that it also remained a branch of literature.

The question of morals has already been touched on. He is very wrong who bases his standard on the notions of today when studying previous periods. Prejudices and preconceived opinions are blinkers. Who of the great warrior



contemporaries, Napoleon, Nelson, and Wellington, would pass the rigid tests of moral orthodoxy if brought before a tribunal in the present year of grace? Yet I believe I am correct in assuming that when they lived they were "average men" as regards the conventions of society as then constituted. The Christian religion as practised by its followers has not always been on the side of human advancement. Superstition and bigotry have often ruled the Church instead of the Church ruling them. In 1431 Joan of Arc was burned at the stake as a witch and a heretic; she is now invoked as a saint by that section of the Faith which condemned her. A statue of her graces the now Protestant cathedral of Winchester. It stands under a canopy looking in the direction of the tomb of Bishop Beaufort, who burst into tears when he heard the sentence on her read in the market place of Rouen.

In his last book, *Historical and Political Essays*, W. E. H. Lecky termed the judging of actions of the past by the current moral standard "a fatal and very common error. This is especially the error of novices in history and of those who without any wide and general culture, devote themselves exclusively to a single period. While the primary and essential elements of right and wrong remain unchanged, nothing is more certain than that the standard or ideal of duty is continually changing. A very humane man in another age may have done things which would now be regarded as atrociously barbarous. A very virtuous man may have done things which would now indicate extreme profligacy. We seldom, indeed, make sufficient allowances for the degree in which the judgments and dispositions of even the best men are coloured by the moral tone of the time or society in which they live. And what is true of individuals is equally true of nations".

Lecky's works, deemed a little old-fashioned by the ultra-modern, who regard every book over a week old as almost Victorian, are well worth perusal. His first literary work, *Leaders of Public Opinion in Ireland*, sold thirty copies or less, but his later volumes cluttered neither the publisher's nor the booksellers' shelves. *The Rise and Influence*

of the *Spirit of Rationalism in Europe*, *The History of European Morals*, *A History of England in the Eighteenth Century*, *Democracy and Liberty* and *The Map of Life* will reward the reader. His slow-moving and polished periods are reminiscent of Dean Henry Hart Milman, the success of whose *History of Latin Christianity* was the reverse of that accorded his earlier *History of Christianity to the Abolition of Paganism in the Roman Empire*. Lecky raised his voice against what he called the school of fatalists who "greatly under-rate the part which accident, political wisdom, and political folly have borne in human affairs". He felt convinced, for instance, that although the French Revolution had been long in the making, it might, "till within a very few years of the catastrophe, have been with no great difficulty averted", and he states reasons why. It was a matter of grave concern to this fine historian, who died in 1903, that the average politician was both too unreflecting and too given to worshipping at the shrine of expediency.

If it were possible to ascend some lofty summit and survey the panorama of the world, to watch the pageant of royal folk, mighty conquerors, princely prelates, skilful statesmen and humble peasants pass in their countless myriads across the plains of time, to peer into each individual mind, to see the working of that mind as the scenes recorded in our history books were enacted over again for our special benefit, we should be able to understand something of the Why and Wherefore of the human race. Such a vista of the past is not within the ken of mortals. For this reason so-called Universal History can never be entirely satisfactory, although audacious individuals from Orosius onwards have attempted to write books about it. The beginner will do well to read one of the many works that aim to give no more than an outline so that he may gain some notion of what has happened, and then pass on to analyse the men and methods of one country and of one period, endeavouring to understand a few of the lessons there revealed. I believe it is always progress of a kind, sometimes by devious routes which seem to take us a long way from the desired haven, but ever a little nearer to a great consummation. Probably

many of my readers will not entirely agree with me in this, and I am aware that I expose myself to barbed arrows tipped with the poison of contradiction. I do no more than venture an opinion after fifty years of reading, pondering and writing.

Every man has his Gethsemane, and the same doctrine applies to nations. History proves, if it proves anything, that the State which fails to fight when it considers its cause is just and backed by moral rightness is eventually eliminated from the roll-call of nations. If you hate war as much as I do, you hate it with envenomed and growing intensity. It has been a factor in the welding of the species into corporate societies and also in their disintegration. Might is not always right, neither is the voice of the people necessarily the voice of God.

I hope I may be forgiven if I have provided more stumbling-blocks than stepping-stones. I have no choice. Until there is only one side to every question and the doctrine of free will is either definitely accepted or rejected, the search for laws in history is likely to elude our vigilance. T. H. Huxley declared that "the one certainty of science is the existence of a mental world". The one certainty of the mental world is the non-existence of two persons whose thoughts are precisely similar.

This is not a doctrine of despair; far from it. Details are not the whole. History must be studied in its general effect. The opinions of eminent authorities so liberally cited in these pages show something of its value, and indicate general tendencies in human behaviour, and therefore of nations. An Atlantic Charter may be signed, Sir William Beveridge and others may formulate Plans, and blue-prints be developed, but it depends on plain folk like you and me to render them something more substantial than paper work, to transform ideas and ideals into solid and lasting realities.

From primeval slime to life, from amoeba to man, from the primitive fashioner of flints to the creator of manifold devices for the betterment, and also for the worsening, of humanity is a span of many millions of years. No New Order

will emerge in the twinkling of an eye. Civilization is necessarily a co-operative process, but, unless it is all-embracing in this essential, is cemented by a mutual regard for both national and international well-being, the graph of achievement will resemble the recording strip of a seismograph. Two painstaking investigators, Professor P. A. Sorokin and Mr. N. N. Golovin, listed the number of wars in Europe between 500 B.C. and A.D. 1925. They totalled 902.

Man has overcome much, tamed the wild, harnessed physical resources, wrested secrets from worlds millions of miles away, but bungled in his attempts to get a firm grip on his own inner self. The instinct of the jungle remains, latent in some, too painfully evident in others. Religion has failed to exorcise what it terms evil; science has perhaps lessened rather than augmented the potentialities for good; history has uttered warnings that have been disregarded. At bottom knowledge can only be useful when it is applied to the decencies of life, and predatory war is not one of them. Granted that life is a fight, there is plenty for humanity to combat other than itself. Extermination is a maniac's conquest, and *Homo sapiens* means sane man. It may be that if we evaluate our learning we shall find that we have neglected branches that would have afforded a richer reward than those on which we have concentrated.

